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THE
BIBLE AND REASON

AGAINST

ATHEISM,

IN

A Series of Letters to a Friend.

BY

A GENTLEMAN OF THE BAR.

Martin Luther Edwards

I am—*Old Testament.*

One God and Father of All.—*New Testament.*

CHICAGO, ILL.:

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PREFACE.

A few words are called for in the way of preface to the following pages. The occasion of which they are the outcome, seems to the writer to have been providential. Unsought, on his part, it certainly was. The correspondence, of which the volume so presented is a part, was commenced, and for some time continued, with no thought of its ever meeting the public eye. The chief reason for its publication is found in the importance of the subject treated, and in the attitude of the public mind in regard to it.

The style of the volume is of necessity controversial. This, in the minds of some, may add to its interest. It is to be hoped that the considerations presented will not, on such account, be less candidly weighed by any of its readers.

Claiming nothing on the score of originality, the writer has simply put forth what, from reading and reflection, he believes to be true,—and this without aiming to accommodate any particular class of thinkers.

In stating matters of history, and quoting the opinions and sentiments of authors, outside of the

Bible, the writer has not had access, to any extent, to original sources of information; and he here gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness therefor chiefly to the following works, which happened to be convenient:—Thayer on Infidelity; Manley's Biblical Review; Smith's Bible Dictionary; Paige's Commentaries; Paige's Selections from Eminent Commentators; Alger's Doctrine of a Future Life; Sawyer's Endless Punishment Examined; and the Encyclopædia Americana.

In preparing the correspondence for publication, liberty has been taken, here and there, to add or omit a word, or phrase, or sentence, or a few sentences—yet not so as to change the essential meaning. The greatest change has been made, mostly in the earlier numbers, in the way of condensation.

The writer is deeply sensible of the imperfection of his performance, and regrets his inability to treat the subject presented in a manner more befitting its importance. While he confesses some misgiving as to how the volume he presents may be received by the different classes of persons into whose hands it may come, yet, with strong confidence in the general correctness of its views, he ventures to send it forth, hoping it may contribute something toward the right settlement in the public mind of the momentous questions involved.

THE AUTHOR. •

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THE BIBLE AND REASON AGAINST ATHEISM.

LETTER I.

Is the Bible the Word of God?—The Compilers of the Old and New Testaments—Inspiration and Revelation—An Illustration—Credulity and Incredulity—The Honest Doubter and the Flippant Skeptic—The God of the Bible and the God of Creation—An Illustration—The Calamitous Events of Nature.

FRIEND G.:—Your communication of the 22d of December last, was duly received. In a “friendly way and spirit,” you submit for my consideration some suggestions touching the divine authenticity of the Bible, and inquire by what authority I call it the word of God. Thanking you for the compliment, altogether too flattering, you pay to my supposed ability in this line, I will endeavor, in the same “friendly way and spirit,” to respond, first noticing your “suggestions.”

1. You say, in substance, that the vote—by yeas and nays, as we pass laws—by the “Popish Councils” on “the books called the New Testament,” and by the “Pharisees of the second Temple,” on “the books that now comprise the Old Testament,” is all the authority of this kind you can find, which to you is no authority at all. I admit that the authority of the writings composing the Bible, does not rest on such basis. If they had no divine authority before, the vote gave them none; if they had, it added nothing. It is altogether another question whether these men were competent to judge of the character of the writings they thus compiled, and passed upon; and this leads me to notice another of your suggestions:

2. You not only say that the decision of these men is of no authority, but you specially discredit their testimony. You say:—"I should be as capable of judging for myself as they were, and I think more so, because, as they made a living by their religion, they had a self-interest in the vote they gave." I must protest against such judgment. It prescribes a criterion to which you would not submit. You put in market your products as a farmer, or mechanic, or offer your professional services, at such a rate of compensation as you deem just. Those with whom you would deal object to your prices as too high, and claim that they are better judges of the value of what you offer than yourself, because you have a self-interest in what you charge. So met, unless conscious of having forfeited your character for integrity, you would feel aggrieved. The truth is, that those who follow any vocation, other things being equal, are best qualified to pronounce on the merits or demerits of any matter connected with their vocation; and their testimony in regard to it is entitled to the highest credit. I speak with some emphasis on this point, because I am persuaded there is, in the minds of many, an unjust prejudice against religious teachers, on the ground that they make their living by such teaching. Why should they be discredited, or put out of the category of honest and truthful men, simply because, devoting their time and talents to a profession which calls on men to live pure and noble, and upright and self-sacrificing lives, they are, nevertheless, compelled to depend on their vocation for a livelihood? Not being of the number in question, I speak the more freely.

3. Notwithstanding you call on me for proof of inspiration, and of the divine authority of the Bible, you seem to have settled the matter in your own mind in advance. You say:—"You may have an opinion that a man is inspired, but you cannot prove it, nor can you have any proof of it yourself, because you cannot see into his mind to see how he comes by his thoughts. And the same is the case with the word *revelation*. There can be no evidence of such a thing, for you can no more prove revelation than you can prove what another

man dreams of; neither can he prove it himself." I submit, that if you want me to prove the inspiration or divine authority of the Bible, you ought to leave the door open, and not shut it against me at the outset. Perhaps, however, you intend this as simply an expression of your present opinion,—how the matter seems to you now, and not as a deliberate and final conclusion. I am disposed to take it in this light, notwithstanding the language is unqualified.

You give as a reason why I cannot prove that a man is inspired, that I "cannot see into his mind, in order to know how he comes by his thoughts." Admitting I cannot, are you sure there is no other method of proving inspiration? We are both standing by a telegraph line. I have never heard of a telegraph, and know nothing of its operations. You are well informed on the subject. As my eyes fall upon the poles and wires, I ask their meaning. You tell me that the poles are simply for the support of the wires; that the wires extend from New York to San Francisco, connecting with the different towns and cities on the route; that messages are constantly traveling along these wires to and fro; that persons situated at the opposite extremes, and at intermediate points, easily converse with each other from their respective situations; and that messages can be sent in this manner, from one extremity of the land to another, with the speed of electricity. I evince amazement, not exactly at the operation, for I do not believe it. You assure me it is even so. I tell you it is absurd. I advance toward the wires and scan them. They look like common wires. They appear perfectly quiescent. I see no motion. I hear no sound of voice or instrument. You say messages are passing although I can neither see nor hear anything to indicate it. I challenge proof and say, "Cut into one of these wires and lay it open, so I can see the operation, witness the passage of the messages, or confess that you are endeavoring to impose on my credulity." You confess you cannot prove your assertion in this way, but affirm you can do it by the testimony of those who send and those who receive the messages, and by exhibiting the mes-

sages themselves. Listening to your explanations, and giving you credit for sincerity, I propose to await your proofs of other kind. Now, as the proof that messages pass to and fro along the telegraph wires, does not depend upon witnessing the operation, upon seeing them pass, so there are other methods of proving inspiration than by actual clairvoyance of the mind of the person inspired. Indeed, no one claims that inspiration has been, or can be, proved in this way; and it seems strange that one should be called upon to encounter such an objection. Nevertheless, the objection appears to be a part of the theory, if theory it may be called, of unbelief which prevails with not a few. On this account it seems appropriate to say a further word touching it.

Some persons take the ground that we can know nothing, and have reason to believe nothing, that cannot be tested by some one of our senses. Your objection seems to look in that direction. You may not go so far. This ground seems to be taken specially by disbelievers in revelation against arguments adduced to prove its truth, and often, it seems to me, in defiance of sound reason and common-sense.

While all men are alike in their essential attributes, individually, they are differently organized, and have consequently different inclinations and tendencies. Some seem to be constitutionally credulous, especially on particular subjects; others are in like manner incredulous, and inclined to reject evidence which is satisfactory to most minds. These tendencies may be increased by constant exercise; or they may be checked and modified by experience and sound judgment. As in other respects, men are differently constituted in those elements of character which make them religious beings, or render them susceptible of religious influence. Religion, with its evidences and claims, seems to constitute a special subject for the exercise of both credulity and incredulity. Great credulity runs into superstition, and great incredulity into skepticism.

When the religious tendencies of the doubting one are strong and in the right direction, his doubts trouble him; he

fights against, and struggles to overcome them. Not so with the doubting one whose religious tendencies are weak or perverted. His doubts give him no trouble; he makes no effort to get rid of them; he rather nurses them. And if, perchance, he has imbibed a prejudice against religion, or against its professors, he mingles his prejudices with his doubts, bringing them to each other's support. And then, again, if he happens to be of a combative turn of mind, and disposed to propagate his views, he is on the lookout for arguments to strengthen his doubts. And so, if he looks into the Bible, it is to find what he can of this character there. He searches for what he regards as blemishes, defects, difficulties, and contradictions; while his eyes are closed, perhaps unconsciously, to its truths, its beauties, and its inspiring and ennobling sentiments. He thus works himself into a condition of chronic doubt, a *profound belief in all unbelief*, as his creed on the subject of religion.

Although the reason you assign why inspiration cannot be proved, seems to admit of no other evidence than actual observation of the senses, I am persuaded you will not go to that extent. You expressly say, "Anything you may produce from history, science and reason, not inconsistent with nature itself, will be thankfully received"—virtually admitting that these things may be laid under contribution in proof of inspiration and revelation.

Honest doubts, with a disposition to weigh evidence candidly, and give every consideration its due weight, are entitled to respect. But there are some persons, who, if they are entitled to be accounted honest, are yet thoughtless, rash, and presumptuous to the last degree in such matters. The Bible, as we have it, has come down to us through long centuries, surviving all manner of attacks, and is to-day strong in the faith and confidence of a larger number of the human family than ever before. This fact, aside from its truth, should commend it to the respect of every fair mind. And then, its subject-matter—involving as it does, the duties, responsibilities, and destiny of the race, for time and eternity—deserves

the most earnest, careful, and impartial thought of every person who would treat a subject of the highest interest as its importance demands.

But the flippant class of skeptics of whom I now speak, perhaps without bestowing one serious thought on the subject, and unacquainted with a tithe of the evidence in support of the divine authority of the Bible, pronounce upon its merits with the utmost confidence. Possessing themselves of the catch-words of doubt and skepticism, they hurl these about valorously, and seem to imagine they are dealing with thunderbolts. They sometimes get answered according to their folly, as was the case with one who encountered a shrewd Quaker:

"Then thee can believe nothing that cannot be verified by some one of thy senses, as that of sight?"

"Just so."

"Well, has thee ever seen thy own brains?"

"No."

"Has thee ever seen any one who has seen them?"

"No."

"Does thee believe thee has any brains?"

4. Your remaining "suggestion," demanding notice, seems to be a bill of indictment against the Bible in general. You say:—"The Bible represents God to be a changeable, passionate, vindictive being; making a world and then drowning it; afterward repenting of what he had done, and promising not to do so again; setting one nation to cutting the throats of another, and stopping the course of the sun till the butchery should be done. But the works of God in the creation preach to us another doctrine. In that vast volume we see nothing to give us the idea of a changeable, passionate, vindictive God; everywhere we behold the impress of a contrary idea,—that of unchangeableness, and eternal order, harmony and goodness. The sun and the seasons return at their appointed times, and everything in creation proclaims that God is unchangeable. Now, which am I to believe, a book that any impostor may make and call the *word of God*, or the creation itself, which none but an Almighty power could make—for

the Bible says one thing, and creation says the contrary? The Bible represents God with all the passions of mortals, and creation proclaims him with all the attributes of a God."

And now, friend G., is this the best you can say of the Bible? Is there nothing to impress a different view? Are you sure that any part of it, interpreted by itself, and in the light of the manners, and customs, and character, and history, of the different peoples to whom it was first announced,—are you sure, I say, that so interpreted, any part of it will support your allegations?

Without going into any matters of detail touching the representations the Bible makes of God as a changeable being, I feel safe in taking the position, that the creation, which you put in such broad contrast with the Bible, furnishes just as much, and just as clear, evidence that God is changeable, passionate, and vindictive, as the Bible does. True, as you say, "the sun and the seasons return at their appointed time"; and from this you argue the "unchangeableness, and eternal order, harmony and goodness" of the God of creation. But is not this a very partial view of the works of creation, and the processes of Nature?

You need to bear in mind that Nature is not all of the sunshine, and radiant sky, and sweet-calm order; that her changes are not all amiable and soothing; that her winds are not all gentle zephyrs; that her rains are not all soft-falling showers. What of the terrible storms which sometimes sweep over the earth? What of the hurricanes of wind, and rain, and hail, with terrific thunder and lightning, which now and then shake mountains, rend forests, desolate cultivated fields, tear up and scatter fences, houses, barns, etc., laying waste everything in their course, and involving man and beast in the general wreck and ruin? What of earthquakes, which unsettle human habitations, and of those volcanoes which sometimes bury whole cities, with their thousands and tens of thousands of inhabitants, of all classes and conditions, and of all ages, from the cradle to the grave,—blotting them, without warning, from the face of the earth, and the map of the nations?

On a delightful Summer morning, I will suppose, we are standing together upon an eminence overlooking a beautiful valley, stretching to the right and left, as far as the eye can reach, and threaded from end to end by a rivulet of crystal waters. This valley is densely populated, and in the highest state of cultivation. Nature and art vie in heightening its attractions. Neat villages and beautiful residences are in view, here and there, over the whole expanse. We behold charming groves, orchards laden with luscious fruit, fields of ripened and ripening grain, meadows dotted with heaps of new-made hay, and pasture lands with their flocks and herds. Gentle breezes come to us laden with fragrant odors; and the hum of busy industry, the voices of man and animal, and the songs of birds, fill the air with music. All nature smiles and happiness reigns.

The scene we behold impresses us with a deep sense of the goodness of the Creator, and we linger in delighted vision until high-noon is passed. You join me in warm expression of our sense of such goodness.

Gradually the atmosphere becomes murky. Dark clouds appear above the western horizon, and heavy thunder is heard, betokening the near approach of a storm. We seek and find shelter. The storm comes on. It proves to be a tornado. Wind, and hail, and rain, with thunder and lightning, in hurricane force, beat for hours on field and habitation, on man and beast, doing their direst work.

Just before night-fall, the elements having spent their force, we stand again on the same eminence, and again survey the same field of vision. The valley is a scene of desolation. It has been swept from end to end with the besom of destruction. The hurricane has made havoc of houses, barns, fences, orchards, fields of grain, and everything in its pathway,—tearing them to pieces and scattering the fragments in all directions. The sparkling rivulet has become a raging torrent of turbid waters, overflowing the land and bearing away houses, barns, fences, fields of grain and hay, and whatever comes in its course. Many lives of man and animal are lost,

and immeasurable damage is done to property and person. In a word, a morning of beauty, abundance, and joy, ends in a night of desolation, deprivation, and sadness unspeakable.

Now, friend G., how do you know that your God of creation, in the morning so smiling and beneficent, has not since then, fallen into a fit of madness, and wreaked his vengeance on the denizens of this, then beautiful, now desolate, vale?

Again. In your view of the "preaching" of the works of creation, what disposition have you made, or can you make, of those dire calamities which now and then come on the inhabitants of earth? How do you reconcile your theory, that the realm of creation is one of "eternal order, harmony, and goodness," with the fact that famine, pestilence, plague, and war, now and then sweep over different portions of the earth, producing unspeakable dread, privation, and suffering, and carrying off its inhabitants by the thousands and tens of thousands?

If you say these calamities come upon men mostly on account of their own folly and wickedness, the question arises,—as man is an essential portion of the works of creation, why did not God, if he is so good and merciful, and such a lover of order and harmony, make man a better sort of being? Why did he constitute him with such passions—such powerful elements of wickedness and mischief?

The evils and calamities to which I have referred, are among the stubborn facts of existence, and must be taken into account, as part of the utterances of creation, when we undertake to announce what creation teaches.

In conclusion, on this point. You say, "The Bible represents God to be a changeable, passionate, and vindictive being;" and that, on this subject, "the Bible says one thing and the creation says the contrary." I think you are widely mistaken as to what the Bible teaches in this respect. In my view, so far as they relate to the same topics, these volumes harmonize, or at least do not conflict. I therefore hold, that before you condemn the Bible, as teaching what you allege, in opposition to what you say creation teaches, you are bound

to clear away some of the difficulties which conflict, or seem to conflict, with your interpretation of creation.

Hoping you may give this subject earnest and unbiased thought, and come to the right conclusion, I am, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, February, 1872.

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LETTER II.

Review—The Main Question—The Question of Inspiration Waived—The Alleged Facts of the Record, if they Existed, Proof of Divine Origin and Authority—If They did not Exist, Who Committed the Fraud, and Where is the Proof of it?

Friend G.:—Many months have transpired since I received your last communication, and you may have concluded that I have abandoned the correspondence commenced between us. On the contrary, it has all the time been my intention to pursue it further. The subject, to me, has become none the less interesting on account of delay. Herein I propose to notice, in the first place, the leading points of your two communications.

Touching the "votes" by which you say it was determined what writings should be comprised in the Old and New Testaments, we have no dispute; they added nothing to the authority of such writings.

We differ as to whether the men who so voted were better qualified than yourself to judge of the character of such writings—for reasons I need not repeat.

Your remark, that if those men had been inspired, they would have been unanimous, is superfluous, as no such claim is made in their behalf.

You claim that they were not even "experts," because they did not agree. I hold that they did agree, in the main, differing no more than experts often do.

You represent me as attempting to prove inspiration

by reference to the telegraph wire. Not so. My illustration was intended to disprove your rule, as you will see by careful reading. It was intended to show that certain operations may go on unseen, the proof of which we may have in results, and that therefore your rule will not hold.

Your remark that the science or telegraphy may be shown to ocular demonstration in any telegraph office, can avail you nothing. Go into any such office, having no knowledge of this method of communication, and look on and listen while the operator sends a message to New York and receives an answer to it. Witness every movement of the operator, and hear every tick of the instrument, and without anything further, you will know no more of what has been accomplished than the veriest Hottentot. You must obtain facts outside of what you thus see and hear. You must have explanations on the subject. These you must credit. You must be satisfied that the wires extend to New York; that the message has actually traveled that distance; that the answer has come back in like manner; that no imposition has been practiced upon you by the operator, or other person giving you information on the subject. All this you must get *outside* of what you *see* and *hear* of the operation itself.

The point I here make is this:—Outside of all that we can see, hear, or otherwise take cognizance of by any of our senses, there is an illimitable field of facts and possible knowledge. This knowledge is all derived by us, so far as we attain it, through faith in the testimony of others, through faith in history, through faith in established science, etc.

He would be regarded as lacking in good sense, or as untruthful, who should deliberately claim that he knows nothing, and can know nothing, derived from such sources. And yet your rule, that you cannot know that a man is inspired, because you cannot see into his mind, and know what are his thoughts, is in the face of all this. Must you not surrender the rule?

I urge this point the more strenuously on account of the fact that doubters in revelation are inclined, when evidences

of its truth are pressed upon them—especially historical evidences—to plead ignorance, and respond, “I don’t know—I don’t know about that,” etc. Now, I insist that they ought not to pretend that they are more ignorant in such matters, than they are willing to admit they are in regard to others, about which they know, and can know no more.

The strongest point you made in your first communication, or the one on which you dwelt the longest, was that in which you alleged that the contents and teaching of the Bible are in conflict with the facts and teaching of creation.

To what you alleged on this point, I replied that the works of creation give as much evidence that the God of creation is changeable, passionate, and vindictive, as the Bible does that its God is such a being,—pointing in proof to the fact that famine, pestilence, plague, earthquakes, devastating storms, desolating wars, etc., frequently occurring, bring unspeakable dread, privation and suffering upon millions of the human race. I held that you were bound to reconcile such facts and occurrences with your view of the teaching of creation, before you arraign the Bible as you do.

You seem to have felt somewhat the force of my argument, for you say, “For the sake of keeping to the point at issue, I yield to your strictures on the characteristics of the ‘God of Nature,’ etc.”

Now, what is the logical effect of such yielding? It can be none other than this—that you acknowledge that the teaching of Nature is as much in conflict with your views of the character of the God of creation, as the teaching of the Bible is with the character of the God of the Bible, as an infinitely wise, good, and just being. You are, therefore, by your own admission, estopped from bringing up again the alleged abominations of Bible teaching, until you shall reconcile the conflicting operations of Nature with the character you ascribe to its God.

But what do you do? In your second communication, without attempting such reconciliation, you arraign the teachings of the Bible as before, and at greater length, and in more

offensive style. Of course, from your own admission, I am relieved from any special notice of such arraignment.

I have thus passed in review what I regard as the essential portions of your communication in the way of objections against the Bible and divine inspiration.

You will notice that I have so far made no attempt to answer your main question touching the authenticity and divine authority of the Bible. This I will now attempt, premising one remark, suggested by what you say of changes, in connection with this volume.

You say,—“The Bible,” in explanation, “is undergoing constant change. Belief to-day is not what it was yesterday.” This is substantially true; and what you thus say of the Bible, I may say, with equal truth, of Nature. Students of the Bible have committed no greater blunders in its interpretation, than have the students of Nature in their interpretations of its mysteries. It is well for both of us to remember that the Bible and Nature remain the same in themselves through all the vicissitudes of interpretation.

In presenting some evidences of the authenticity and divine authority of the Bible, which satisfy my own mind, I shall endeavor to take a common-sense view, and shall address myself, in the way of argument, to your reason and intelligence. This I am led to do in a somewhat controversial style, because, while you ask my opinion on the subject, you undertake to controvert what you suppose it to be.

I find, then, in the world to-day, an institution called Christianity, whose adherents claim for it as a religion, divine origin and authority, as revealed in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, its alleged founder. In the keeping of the adherents of this institution, known as the Christian church, I find a collection of writings, known as the New Testament, and by it held to contain an authentic account of the origin, and a faithful delineation of the character, of this religion.

In tracing back the history of this institution, I find it has come down through some eighteen centuries, and that

these writings have been extant and in the same keeping for about the same length of time; and further, that these writings were the productions, for the most part, if not entirely, of the men with whose names as their authors they stand associated.

Now, is all this so? Is there such an institution? Have these writings been so kept and so handed down? Are they genuine? Or, on the other hand, are these writings spurious? Have they been invented and imposed upon a credulous world with no foundation in fact? And are Christianity and the Christian church as they exist to-day, and have existed in the past, without any foundation but falsehood and fraud?

I suppose you will not answer all of the questions first stated in the affirmative. Do you answer any of them in the negative? Do you answer those last-named in the affirmative? If not, can you find any middle ground on which to place your feet?

If you reject the writings in question as without verity, what reason have you to believe in any alleged history of the past? Can you cite any that has a better claim to acceptance? I suppose you have faith in Rollin, and Gibbon, and Plutarch. You believe there were such men as Alexander, the Cæsars, Cicero, Aristides, Lycurgus, Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. Can you accept the histories and writings I have named as substantially authentic, and by the same rules of logic and criticisms reject the New Testament as a fraud? Can you believe that such men as I have named, lived and flourished in the past, and deny that such a personage as Jesus Christ lived on the earth at the commencement of the Christian era, without contravening the rules of evidence on which you believe in the existence of the others?

It is serviceable in prosecuting any important inquiry to have a good starting-point. It seems to me that the suggestions and queries I have stated constitute such a point. May I not, then, ask you to weigh them well, and decide them pro or con, before going further?

And here I am reminded that you require such evidence

as would be necessary to prove any material fact in a court of justice. I am not certain that you are entitled to require this. Proof that should be deemed satisfactory in any case must depend upon the nature of the case. You doubtless believe many things you cannot prove in a court of justice. Occurrences which took place eighteen centuries ago, and which could then have been proved in the manner you require, cannot be thus proved now. We cannot bring the witnesses into court, neither can we take their depositions. Shall we therefore ignore all the past? If not, what then?

To return to the parallels I have indicated. Do you believe that the histories of Rollin and Gibbon, and the biographies of Plutarch, are genuine and authentic? Do you firmly believe that such men as Alexander and the others I have named, once lived? If so, can you furnish such proof thereof as you demand? If you say you believe nothing on the subject, I confess I know not how to reach your case. If you say you do believe, but confess you cannot furnish the particular kind of proof you demand of us, may I not ask why you make such demand?

For my own part, whether the truth of Christianity can be satisfactorily established in court at the present day, or not I deem that its witnesses are many, and its evidences of great weight, and should prove satisfactory to any unbiassed mind, after thorough and careful consideration.

You inquire in regard to the *inspiration* of the Bible. I waive this question, at least for the present,—first, because much difference of opinion exists on the subject, as to its method, or methods, and as to how much or how little is involved in it; and second, and chiefly, because the truth of Christianity does not rest here—at least not solely, nor mainly.

To explain:—If those who wrote the books of the New Testament were inspired by the divine Spirit to write as they did, we have in such inspiration, if it is made a certainty to us, a reason for our faith; but in such case, the truth rests, not in the inspiration, but in the *facts* to which the writers bear

witness. Consequently, to prove the truth of Christianity, we are not compelled to prove that the writers of the books of the New Testament were especially inspired to write them.

You have read these writings. You know what are their leading statements and declarations. You will admit, that if you had been present and seen with your own eyes, and heard with your own ears, what they declared was said and done, you could have given a substantially true account of the same, without such inspiration. You will also admit that differences of narration touching immaterial points between any number of such witnesses, should militate nothing against their integrity, and nothing against the declaration of material facts in which they agree. Am I not right in these suggestions? If so, does not your objection to revelation, founded on the alleged impossibility of proving inspiration, dwindle into comparative insignificance?

These writings have been extant for nearly eighteen centuries, substantially as they are. I take it to be impossible, rationally, to account for their existence and preservation to the present day, if they are a fraud, without such exposure of the imposition as would have destroyed or prevented all credence in them in intelligent and discerning minds. Admitting their genuineness and authenticity, I am compelled on their authority—even on the ground that they were not written by inspiration—to come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was a teacher sent from God, and that his religion is of divine origin and authority.

I might go on to speak of the contents of this volume—the New Testament—of the internal evidence they furnish of their own truth; but this communication is already long, and I must bring it to a close.

I trust you will take one side or the other of the main question I have presented, to-wit:—Are the writings of the New Testament genuine and authentic? or are they an imposition and a fraud?

From what you have already said, I take it you will affirm the latter branch of the question. I trust you have found

what you consider good grounds for your belief, and that you are able and ready to give a reason for the faith that is in you. May I not reasonably call upon you to do so?

I desire to be particularly informed who committed the imposture, when it was done, and what contemporary evidence can be adduced in proof.

It can scarcely fail to have occurred to you, that you, too, have a creed, a belief, a faith, in which you have confidence, and to which you adhere. You have indicated what this is in the matter under discussion; and it seems appropriate that I call on you, as I do, for your reasons. After what you have written you will not shrink from a frank and full answer.

I conclude by a quotation from your second communication, in which I concur. You say:

"It seems to me, to pretend to believe anything on insufficient evidence, and contrary to human reason, and which will not endure the test of our senses, is stooping to a credulity entirely beneath the dignity of our proper manhood."

Hoping to hear from you further on this important subject, and that you may be more punctual than I have been, I remain,
Very Truly Yours,

NOVEMBER, 1874.

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LETTER III.

Methods that Should be Avoided—The Different Moods of Nature—Antiquity of the Bible, and of Sin and the Devil—The Parentage of Jesus—Tyranny—Inspiration—Could Jesus have been Born without a Natural Father?—The First Man—the First Oak Tree—The Bible Scripts a Fraud—Christ Wrote Nothing—Tradition—Christ the Reputed Founder of Christianity—Some bad Christians—The Fight of the first Christians against Paganism—The Golden Rule—The Main Question—The Unanimity of the Fathers

FRIEND G.:—I have received and carefully read yours of December, 1874, and proceed to respond to it.

You will allow me to indicate two or three particulars in which I am compelled to think you do not treat the subject of our correspondence quite as you should.

1. I had a right to presume, when you first addressed me, that your desire was not mere controversy, but to elicit the truth. This should be our mutual aim. It seems to me that your resort, so largely, to caricature and ridicule, does not quite comport with such aim.

2. You assume that I have said or believe certain things—particularly that the Bible is the word of God, and inspired—and proceed to combat them. Having inquired my views, you should wait until I state them. I have not said that the Bible is the word of God, or inspired; nor have I said the contrary. I quote from your last as follows:

“Of course, all people and all books are inspired in one sense; but the Bible is claimed to be divinely inspired, *because it is the word of God*. Now, right here, is our point of difference,—you claiming it to be the word of God, and I that

it is no more the word of God than is 'Rollin's Ancient History,' or last year's almanac. Indeed, we might claim that these are all the words of God. Let us now understand, that you will not resort to this kind of subterfuge finally; or if so, that this controversy is over."

When you consider that I have taken no such position, you will admit that your caution is entirely gratuitous.

3. In your last you represent that the Bible, and the God of the Bible, sanction bigamy, wars, and human butchery; that God lied to Eve, while the devil told the truth; that God repented, etc., etc. You go on with a long category of what you regard as Bible abominations, and put interrogations in corresponding style, and call on me to "answer," "answer." You seem entirely oblivious of what I have said to you on the subject. Let me refresh your memory.

In your first communication, you say, "The Bible represents God to be a passionate, changeable, vindictive being," and undertake to prove it by references. You say, "The Bible says one thing, and creation says the contrary." To this I replied, that creation affords as much evidence that God is a changeable, passionate, and vindictive being, as does the Bible, calling your attention in proof, to the woe, and horror, and ruin brought upon man and beast by famine, pestilence, storms, volcanoes, etc.,—alleging that you were bound to reconcile these things with the character you ascribe to the God of creation before you arraign the Bible as you do.

You will agree with me, that when an argument is once answered, it is not proper, in the same discussion, to bring it up again, without attempting to dispose of the answer. You iterate and reiterate, without any such attempt.

Can I persuade you to look this matter in the face? For example:—You have read in the newspapers an account of the typhoon—more awful than anything we ever experience in this region—which not long since swept and deluged the eastern coast of China, destroying ten thousand lives, besides the immense damage it otherwise did. Now, how do you know that your God of creation was not then in a terrible

rage of passion, and took that method of wreaking his vengeance on that ill-fated people and land? And how do you know that he did not "repent" immediately before, and then again immediately after such dire calamity—as you note in regard to the Bible account of the deluge?

I will now notice more particularly some things in your last.

1. I did not claim that the Bible must be true because of its antiquity. I merely spoke of it as coming down through a long succession of centuries, as a reason why it should be treated with deference. Hence there was no occasion for you to query whether I claim something in favor of sin and the devil on that same account,—especially so, if they have in them nothing intrinsic entitling them to deference.

2. I did not claim that if you "believe in the historical existence of Alexander," you "must necessarily believe that Jesus was born without a natural father." The point I made was this—that if you believe there was such a person as Alexander, you have equal reason to believe there was such a person as Jesus Christ. Nothing was intimated as to how he came into the world.

3. You accuse the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, with tyranny, because, as you allege, they make a "demand upon our *credulity*, not upon our intelligence, and reason, judgment, and common-sense;" because they "demand and require we should have full faith in that which is naturally improbable and impossible;" and because they "hold us responsible against our conscientious beliefs."

This is mere assertion. You give no proof, and can give none. On the contrary, the Bible appeals to our reason and common-sense. If it demands faith, it furnishes a basis for it. While it does not deal harshly with those who have conscientious doubts, it does condemn those who reject evidence, and shut their eyes against the light of truth.

I suppose you will admit that there are those who, in other matters, controlled by prejudice and passion, do this. This trait has been so notoriously manifested in the life of

humanity, as to occasion the proverb:—"There are none so blind as those who won't see." Such persons must suffer the consequences of their folly. And so in regard to those who fail to know the truth because of their indolence, or because of the mis-improvement of their time and opportunities. In all this, there is no tyranny.

4. You say that in waiving the question of *inspiration*, I waive the whole question. Not so. Why overlook my argument in connection?

5. You say:—"I now, as heretofore, accept the Bible as I do any other book, neither affirming nor denying its contents, excepting such statements as are naturally untrue." This is more non-committal than otherwise. Will you say whether you accept the New Testament as true, "excepting such statements as are *naturally* untrue"?

6. You persistently object to the Bible and its teaching, as having any claim to authority, on the ground that it alleges things to be true which are contrary to Nature—referring especially to what are regarded as miracles.

Let me ask you to consider whether you may not be mistaken in this matter; whether you have not pronounced judgment without being aware of all the facts and principles that bear upon the question. You are very positive. Have you a right to be? Bear in mind that Nature is very extensive—stretching beyond the ken and comprehension of our profoundest philosophers; also, that she is very ancient, having been at work many, many ages, and evolved wonderful things not dreamed of in the philosophy of any ordinary mortal. Have you fathomed, with your line and plummet, her utmost depths? Have you made yourself familiar with all her ways? I will not ask whether you were brought up with her, but must say, to speak as positively as you do, you ought to be acquainted with her operations from first to last. If you conclude your knowledge does not comprehend so much, may you not well abate something of the assurance with which you speak?

7. To aid you, if need be, in testing your acquaintance with Nature, allow me to put two or three interrogations, for which you have laid the foundation. As before noted, you speak as though you were expected to believe "that Jesus was born without a natural father." Again you say, "That a man should be born without a natural father, is naturally untrue." Let us see.

You believe there was a time when there were no human beings on the earth. You consequently believe there was a *first man*. Now, please tell me whether this first man came into the world without a natural father. If he had a father, who was he? If he had no such father, please answer whether he came into being contrary to Nature.

Again. You doubtless believe there was a time when there were no trees upon the face of the earth—when, for example, there was a *first oak tree*. Now tell me, if you can, whether this first oak tree grew from an acorn? If it did, where did the acorn come from? If the first acorn did not come from an oak, or the first oak from an acorn,—did they, or either of them, come into being contrary to Nature?

Once more. If the first oak came not from an acorn, or the first acorn came not from an oak; and if the first man came without a natural father, such as you and I have had, is there not a bare possibility that Jesus might have been born without such father? If so, then the testimony that he was so born, constitutes no insuperable objection to the truth of the New Testament record. And if we admit that he was so born, or might have been, we may with as good reason admit that he may have wrought miracles, either in accordance with some law of nature unknown to us, or through the exercise of super-human power.

8. You allege that the Bible "scripts" are to a great extent a fraud, and give in proof several reasons, each of which you introduce with a "because." I will notice these in order.

(1) Your first "because" is that the book is inconsistent with, and repudiates Nature. Upon this point I need only refer to what I have already said.

(2) Your second "because" alleges that it gives falsehood in its pretended authors. In proof, you say that "Moses never wrote the Pentateuch." You do not point out the falsehood by chapter and verse, and for good reason, as I suppose. You further say that it relates things which happened long after the death of Moses. This may be true; and it may at the same time be true, that he wrote nearly the whole of this part of the Old Testament, as I believe he did. I know of no one who claims that he wrote every word of it. You will have to find some other ground for your charge of falsehood.

(3) As your third "because," you say:—"The Bible itself contains the proof that the old priest, Hilkiah, found the book about 628 years before Christ." Under this head you further say:—"The Christian father, Ireneus, distinctly declared that the books of the Old Testament were not in existence until they were fabricated several years after the Babylonish captivity by Esdras." Now, which of these statements do you account good authority? If Hilkiah found the book 628 years before Christ—which was before the captivity—Esdras did not fabricate it more than seventy years after. If he did fabricate it, it was not in existence in the time of Hilkiah. I don't believe Ireneus uttered what you attribute to him, and I am sure it is not true.

(4) Your fourth "because" embraces several items, which I will notice.

First. You say:—"The word of Christ (so called) is not his word." How can you know that he did *not* utter what is attributed to him? You were not there. Neither have you conversed with those who were.

Second. No one pretends that Christ ever wrote, or ordered any one to write, any portion of the New Testament.

Third. You say:—"No portion of the New Testament was written during the life of Christ, nor till long afterward; and tradition, *true or false*, passed from one writer to another, without examination, until at last it became too late to examine them to any purpose."

Here, again, I am surprised at the confident assurance with which you assert things you cannot possibly know, unless

you have some method, not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals, of learning what transpired—rather did *not* transpire—eighteen hundred years ago. Pray, what item of history can you cite, going to show that the subject-matter of the writings of the New Testament—as tradition or otherwise—passed from hand to hand “*without examination*, until at last it became too late to examine them to any purpose”? The very reverse of this is true, as I am persuaded.

In speaking of the collection of these writings made by Origen, I must give you credit, in passing, for not claiming that you are “as capable of judging in the premises for yourself as he was, and more so,” as he “made a living” by his religion.

9. You say:—“I admit that Christ is the reputed founder of the Christian religion.” I desire to take this admission just as you intended it, but am uncertain how much you mean by it. You say:—“reputed founder.” You may believe, nevertheless, that he was a creature of the imagination—a myth. Allow me to ask, do you believe he was a *real person*, and the *actual founder* of the Christian religion?

10. You think that the devil and some modern Christians are “about alike.” I regret to admit that there is too much truth in this. The fault, however, is with the unworthy professors, and not with Christianity itself, as exhibited in the precepts and life of its founder.

It is sad that the inconsistent lives of such professors should furnish one of the most effective weapons of infidelity. It is effective, however, only in the minds of those who do not distinguish between sincerity and hypocrisy, and who can make no allowance for the failures of those who, though sincere and true at heart, yet fail to come up in all things and at all times to their perfect standard.

Let me entreat you to bear in mind, that the Christian church, according to its original intent, is not composed of those who have *attained perfection*, but of a body of men and women who accept Christ as their Leader, and purpose and aim to *grow up* into his likeness, by walking in his footsteps.

11. You think that if the early Christians had not spent the first three hundred years in fighting Paganism, myself, and others like me, would probably have been Polytheists at this day. It may be. And pray, what would *you* have been? And are you not indebted to the same cause for your boasted freedom from degrading superstition? Such I believe to be the case. In spite of all the odium you feel yourself at liberty to heap upon Christianity, you are greatly its debtor, and you cannot help it. Its genial light and warmth, pervading like the atmosphere, the whole land, comes to your own hearth and household, and you would not have it otherwise.

Appealing to yourself in proof of this, let me ask: Would you, on any consideration, allow yourself and family, and all you have, to be taken up and set down in a purely pagan land? Or, would you on any consideration, be willing to have the Christian community and institutions by which you are surrounded—faulty as they may be—removed, and their places supplied by pagans and pagan institutions? If you answer in the negative, as I am sure you must, let me ask you, in all seriousness, whether, in consideration of the benefits yourself and family have received, you ought not to abate your hostility and stay your hand?

12. The "Golden Rule" as taught by Confucius, and perhaps by others, if I have a correct idea, differs from that taught by Christ—the former being of a negative character, simply, while the latter is positive. Neither of these constitutes the highest rule of life, as taught by Christ. But I cannot now dwell on this point.

In my last communication, in complying with your request, I gave my views, in part, touching the claims of the Bible to our acceptance, confining my attention to the New Testament. I endeavored to do this so far as possible, from your standpoint,—that is to say, waiving for the time the question of inspiration, and treating the book like any other, taking it for what it is worth.

My inquiry so far, however, has simply been as to how we came by the book, its authorship, and whether the writings are genuine and authentic.

Without detailing evidence on the subject, I held that this book has come down to us through some eighteen centuries; that we have as great reason to credit its statements, as we have those of any historian or biographer; that we cannot, indeed, reject it as a fraud, without at the same time destroying the foundation of our faith in all history of the past. In connection, I inquired your views on the subject.

You acknowledge that Origen, about the middle of the third century, made a selection from the writings then extant, embracing the canon in circulation at the present day. You virtually admit, then, that we have these writings, as Origen had them, and that, if a fraud, they must have been invented before his day. You are therefore shut up, for any proof of fraud, to the period between Origen and the apostles. Can you lay your finger on any such proof? If you can, I beg you to do it.

Let me, in the meantime, call your attention to a large number of witnesses who lived between the times of Origen and of the apostles, whose writings are either now extant, or are quoted by those whose writings have come down to us. These witnesses, one and another, testify to the existence of all of the books of the New Testament. Some of them mention or quote from all or nearly all of them, and their quotations correspond with the present readings. I can only name some of the most prominent.

Immediately preceding Origen, was Tertullian, who flourished about 189-220. A little earlier, 186-217, was Clement, the preceptor of Origen. Ireneus, 170-180, was the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of the apostle John. Justin Martyr, 140-165, wrote two apologies for the Christians, which were presented to the Roman emperors and Senate. Papias, 110-116, conversed with those who had seen and heard the apostles. Polycarp, the disciple of John, who died about the year 100, wrote an epistle to the church at Phillippi, which abounds with references to the books of the New Testament. Ignatius, who was cotemporary with the apostles, quoted from two of the Gospels, the Acts, and most of the Epistles. Clem-

ent and Barnabas, who were companions of the apostles, quote from the gospel histories.

From all we can gather—and the sources of information are not meager—there was a remarkable unanimity among the Christians, during the first two centuries, touching the origin of their sect, and the foundation of their faith. Although widely scattered, and having their centers of influence in different and distant parts of the world, they kept up their intercourse with each other and preserved general unanimity.

The New Testament writings were widely circulated and generally read. Origen says of them:—"They are not private books, or such as are read by a few only, and those studious persons, but they are books read by everybody."

Of the unanimity of the Christians, Ireneus says:—"The church, though spread throughout the world, has but one faith—those in Germany, in Spain, among the Celts; those in the East, those in Egypt, and in Africa, and in all places, have one faith, as if they lived in one house, yea, they seem to have but one soul, and heart, and preach and teach as if they had but one mouth." Could anything be more emphatic?

We have, then, as it seems to me you must admit, an array of evidence in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of these writings, such as cannot be brought in favor of any others of equal age. And such being the case, we must take the statements of the writers, whether inspired or not, as made honestly and in good faith, unless we discover evidence of intent to deceive. With this view, shall we open the book and examine its contents? What say you?

I shall be glad to hear from you again on this subject—especially if you have something new, important, and pertinent to the issue, to offer.

As ever, yours,

FEBRUARY, 1875.

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LETTER IV.

Changeable View of God—Nature is probably God—No Personal God—Nature Needs no Apology—Not so the Bible—Ordeals of Nature—Man a Part of Nature—Man Responsible—Not so, the Brutes—A Dilemma—No First Man—First Men—The Position of Jesus—Miracles—Which are the true?—Extraordinary Position—A Bare Assertion—The First Oak—Dreams—Miracles of the New Testament—Some of Them Criticised—Answer—Others Examined—Remarkable in Character, of Great Numbers and Variety, and Performed in the Presence of Friends and Enemies—Tradition—Tyranny—The Mosaic Law—Idolatry made Treason—The Result—Treatment of Conscientious Doubts—A Bright and a Dark Side to Christianity—Skeptical and Christian Free Thought, and their Results, Compared.

FRIEND G.:—Yours of February 27, 1875, was duly received, and has had my careful consideration. I am much indebted to you for the friendly view you take of what I have written, and your expressions of kindly regard. These, be assured, I cordially reciprocate.

When we commenced our correspondence I had a right to suppose you believed in a Supreme Being, whom you designated the "God of Creation," and confronted against the God of the Bible, alleging that the latter is changeable, passionate, tyrannical, etc., and that the former is the reverse of this. To your allegation I replied that the works of creation give as clear evidence that its God is of the character you depict as the Bible does that such is the character of its God. I cited evidences in proof of this, and called on you to reconcile these with your position. Without attempting anything of the kind, you presently explained that by "God of Creation" you meant God of *Nature*. Not seeing how this

could help you, I still pressed the argument. Now, coming down to the foot of the ladder, you further explain, that "God of Nature" probably means "Nature, the Universe, or universal nature, including its laws, rules, principles, properties, and whatever else, known or unknown, may enter into and belong to its make-up." This "probable" God, you hold, is no "personal God,"—in other words, as seems to me, *no God at all*.

Having now reduced your God to the last analysis, it will be in order to proceed with the argument in a somewhat different manner.

Two neighbors, it is said, got into trouble about a kettle one had borrowed of the other. The quarrel was carried into court. The plaintiff sued for damages done in breaking the kettle. The defendant answered, first, that he did not break it; second, that it was broken when he got it; and third, that he never had it.

If you had told me at the first that you had no God, or only a "probable" God, the course of argument would have been different—possibly within narrower compass. But no matter. I make no complaint. If you are satisfied, I am. I take the following proposition from your last as the basis of further argument on this point:

"If I believed in a personal God who had issued such a book as the Bible, or was otherwise exercising inhumanity to his people, I might feel myself called upon to be his apologist; but I do not, and I feel happy in the thought. I ask no man to make apologies for the ordeals of Nature; yet I know how distressing natural calamities often are, from practical experience, both by sea and land."

Your position I understand to be this:—The idea of a personal God is consonant with the idea that inhumanity, tyranny, etc., are crimes deserving reprobation and punishment; and that if the God of the Bible has commanded or approbated any of these things, he is *prima facie* guilty, and "apology" in his behalf is needed. On the other hand, as there is no personal God, whatever happens in the realm of Nature, no such moral considerations are involved, and no apology,

therefore, is demanded, however "distressing" may be its ordeals.

Let us take a brief view of Nature and of some of its ordeals. Your definition is sufficiently comprehensive. Not to speak of anything beyond, it comprises the globe we inhabit, with everything that belongs to it,—all matter, organic and inorganic; all life, vegetable and animal,—with all their properties, conditions, relations, dependencies, and mutations.

Animal life exists in innumerable gradations and almost endless variety, rising from the lowest up to man. All grades and classes are adapted to the spheres in which they are respectively found; and while so constituted that they may and do enjoy much happiness, they are at the same time so constituted, and so conditioned, as to be subject to many distressing ordeals. They seem to be so linked, from the lowest to the highest, that the existence of one class depends upon another—generally a lower one. One devours and lives on the other. Not only does one class or tribe war on another, but those of the same class sometimes war to the death among themselves; and this is true even of man, the highest.

You will notice that what is thus done on the part of the lower animals, proceeds entirely from their likes and dislikes, their loves and hates, their propensities and passions,—without any restraint, or sense of responsibility, or consciousness of wrong. Neither the hawk, the wolf, the lion, nor the boa-constrictor, feels that he commits murder, or is guilty of any crime, when he pounces upon and devours his victim, or when he encounters those of his own or another class in deadly conflict; but the calamity to the sufferer is none the less distressing on that account.

How, now, stands the case between man and man touching such ordeals, and what is the light in which they are regarded? When nation wars against nation; or tribe against tribe; when man, prompted by malice or driven by passion, takes the life of his fellow-man; when he robs him of his liberty or property; or when, through seduction, he destroys the virtue and peace of his family—is any wrong done? Are such

acts crimes? Is there a moral sentiment in community which condemns them? What is *your* judgment in the premises? Do you deem them wrong—wicked?

The acts in question are as much a part of the "ordeals" of Nature as earthquakes, cyclones, and pestilence, and oftentimes more distressing. If you condemn or apologize for them, you must do so on Christian and Bible grounds, where a personal God is acknowledged. On such ground you have no right to stand. From your own standpoint, what can you know of murder, and slavery, and robbery, and seduction, as crimes? And with what grace or consistency can you condemn the Bible, or the God of the Bible, on account of these things?

You find yourself here between the horns of a dilemma. You cannot hold to both. If you condemn these things you acknowledge amenability to a higher power—to a personal God. If you condemn them, still denying a personal God, you must do so, as I have shown, on Bible ground, where, of course, you are a trespasser. A wide field here opens to view. I leave you to consider the situation.

In your last, you frankly admit that you are not "all-wise," and "do not know all of Nature." ¹ You still claim, however, to be wise enough to know that a "miracle is contrary to Nature," and still insist that Jesus could not have been born without a natural father.

In my last, to test your knowledge of Nature, as well as to elucidate the general subject, I inquired whether the first man came into the world without a natural father; and if so, why Jesus might not have so come, etc. You reply that you "do not believe there ever was a first man on this earth."

Well, I am finding out more and more of your philosophy, if such it may be called. I have not, however, on second thought, gained much on this point, for you only tell me what you "do not believe." Allow me to ask, do you *believe anything* on the subject? I suppose you do, and it may not be out of place for me to anticipate one or two possible answers.

First, you may answer that mankind have existed upon

the earth from all eternity; or second, that, at some point of time in the past, there sprang into being, not the first man, but the *first men* of the race.

As I cannot think you will give the first answer, I will not ask whose disciple you are, or whether this is a new departure of your own. Giving the second, my question remains in full force, requiring a simple change from the singular to the plural—did the first men come into being without natural fathers; and if so, did they so come contrary to Nature?

I cannot allow you to evade my question and argument, by alleging that it is immaterial how the human race originated. It is material to the point in hand. You claimed to know that Jesus could not have been born without a natural father; it would be contrary to Nature. Now, if you know this, you ought to know whether the first men came into being without natural fathers; and if they did, whether they so came contrary to Nature.

I cannot allow you to plead ignorance, even, as to how the race originated, while you claim such positive knowledge in the other case. And please bear in mind, in this connection, that we are not—at least *I* am not—discussing the question whether Jesus was “born a God.”

You have much to say, especially in your last, about his being a God. You speak of his Godhead; of his being born a God, and dying a God; of young Gods, and raising Gods, etc. This is a question between those who believe in Christianity, rather than between them and skeptics. I do not, therefore, feel called upon to answer further what you say on the subject, not a little of which is in the way of ridicule.

You have much to say in your last about miracles, and wish to know of me which are the true, and which are the false. For myself, I regard nothing as a miracle, in a sense bearing upon the issue between us, that is not produced by superhuman power. A great many wonderful things have been done, and can be done, through mere human agency. I do not call these miracles. For the true, I refer you to the New Testament account.

I want to call your attention to the extraordinary character of your position in regard to miracles. You insist that a miracle is *contrary to Nature* and *impossible*. You do not tire of repeating this in one form and another. You say:—"Miracles are the very essence and substance of superstition, * * * and it is only credulity or ignorance that will accept a miracle."

You may not have thought of the matter, but when you reflect, you will not deny that all this is *bare assertion* on your part. I ask you to recollect that in your first communication you gave me to understand that assumption, with you, would be taken for naught. I have a right to insist on the same rule. What weight, then, can you expect me to give to this unsupported assertion of yours? Though you repeat it a thousand times, you make no progress. I could credit such an assertion made by one who shows himself well enough acquainted with Nature to pronounce on the subject oracularly. You will pardon me if I say you have not, in my judgment, yet attained such eminence; and further, that until you can render a reason, it will be as well, so far as I am concerned, to omit the assertion.

My interrogations in regard to the oak, introduced by way of illustration and argument, you dispose of less satisfactorily, if possible, than those in regard to the origin of man. A leading point, as in the other case, was to ascertain whether you knew enough of Nature to pronounce that Jesus could not have been born without a natural father. I inquire what you *know* in the premises, and you answer by telling me what you "*do not think*." You do not think the first oak tree was born of a female oak without the benefit of a nut. In this you think you "*answer sufficiently*." I do not. Pray, was there such a "*nut*," and if so, where did it come from? If not, how did this first oak tree come?

Why not answer as in the case of man, that you do not believe there ever was a first oak tree? It seems to me the cases are parallel; and that as the disciple of any consistent scientist, or as standing on your own new ground, you should

treat them alike. Without further words on this point, let me say that I am anxious to have you satisfy me, if you can, that you know enough of Nature to know that Jesus could not have been born without a natural father. If you cannot do this, and can give no support to your assertion, it seems to me you may as well confess that you have come to a stand.

Referring to the dream of Joseph, you allege that "the whole ground-work of the divinity of Christianity depends upon a dream." I had supposed that the question of the divine mission and authority of Christ rested, not chiefly, if at all, on the manner of his conception, but on what he became, underwent, and suffered; on his teaching and wonderful works, and spotless life; and on his death and resurrection. In this I think Christians generally agree.

For myself, I am not very superstitious. I place little reliance on dreams in general; and yet, from the standpoint of the existence of a personal God, and a spiritual world, I think it not incredible—aside from any testimony on the subject—that revelations may have been made to man in this way. From your stand-point this may appear "laughable."

You further say:—"Sensible people in this age esteem a person an imbecile who regards dreams, and the whole Christian world place such faith in them as actually to found their religious belief upon them." As a specimen of sublime assumption, this is superb. The whole Christian world, including "imbeciles," on one side, and "sensible people" on the other!

Your criticism on some of the miracles of the New Testament is certainly remarkable. As every one knows, the record shows that Christ wrought many miracles, and that large numbers followed him from place to place to hear his teaching, to witness his performances, and to be healed of their maladies. These miracles were performed wherever he happened to be at the time, and in the immediate presence of the people, who crowded around him in great numbers. Yet, taking notice of a few of these, you would have it that they were wrought away from the observation of the people, or

under such conditions as to prevent the exposure of the "trick."

You say that when Jesus was transfigured, he took with him "only his three favorites;" when he turned water into wine his witnesses were "merry"; when he raised the daughter of Jairus, he "put away all her friends"; when he restored the blind man to sight, he took him "aside from observation"; when he cleansed the leper, he charged him to "say nothing to any man"; and that the pretended resurrection of Christ was "in private."

A word only is necessary touching each of these references. The record in regard to turning water into wine, does not indicate that those who drank it, and whom you seem to regard as "witnesses" of the miracle, were "merry" in any such degree as to be incapable of judging of the quality of the wine, but rather the contrary. The governor of the feast testified as to this point simply. The servants who filled the water-pots, and drew the water, were the witnesses of the miracle. Three witnesses of the transfiguration, seem to count with you as no evidence, or as insufficient, because they were "favorites." In the case of the daughter of Jairus, the witnesses were five, including her father and mother. I find no account of the taking of a blind man "aside from public observation" to practice upon him. The nearest to it is the case mentioned in Mark viii: 22-25, where it is said that Jesus took by the hand a blind man and led him out of the town, and restored him to sight. After the first operation he said, "I see men as trees walking"; after the second it is said, "he saw every man clearly." It would seem as though the men he so saw were witnesses of the transaction. In the charge of Jesus to the leper he cleansed—"See thou say nothing to any man"—you see evidence of a "trick." You must have a sharp vision, indeed. If it was simply a trick, what could be gained by keeping it secret? How, indeed, could he do a successful business in such line, without some kind of advertising? In your reference to the "pretended" resurrection of Jesus as "in private," you overlook the fact that he was repeatedly seen and

identified afterward, and at one time by upward of five hundred brethren.

Let me now call your attention to some of the other miracles of Jesus, suggesting that you take particular note of their numbers and variety, the remarkable character and attendant circumstances of some of them, and the numbers of persons—friends and foes of Jesus—who witnessed them, as shown in the record.

Note the passages which speak of the instant healing of a woman who had been afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve years; of a man sick of the palsy, who, at the word of Jesus, took up his bed and walked; of the centurion's servant, whom he healed without seeing him; of the giving of sight to a man born blind; of the restoration to life of the widow of Nain's son, and also of Lazarus, after he had been dead four days; and of the feeding of thousands of men and women on a few loaves and fishes.

Consulting these and other passages, you will see that these and other miracles were performed, not only in the presence of the disciples of Jesus, but of "multitudes," of a "press" and "throng" of "much people," and sometimes of thousands.

We are expressly told that great multitudes came to Jesus at different times and in different places, having with them those afflicted with various maladies; that they brought to him all that were diseased,—the lame, blind, deaf, dumb, maimed, and many others; that he healed them; that those of them who only touched the hem of his garment were made perfectly whole; and that in view of such acts the "multitude" wondered and glorified the God of Israel.

The giving of sight to the man "born blind" is instructive in a number of particulars;—in the reality of the performance as a miracle; in the proof of the identity of the subject, and of the fact of the change; in the stubborn unbelief of the leading Jews; and in the illustration it furnishes of the impenetrable blindness of those who persistently shut their eyes against the light, and "won't see."

Alike instructive, as to the reality of the performances as miracles, and as to the number of witnesses, is the record we have of the feeding of great multitudes of people with a few loaves and fishes. There were two such instances. In one case, about five thousand men were fed with "but five loaves and two fishes;" and of the fragments that remained, there were "twelve baskets full." In the other case, four thousand men were fed with "seven" loaves "and a few little fishes"; and of the broken meat left there were "seven baskets full." In both cases, the thousands named were "beside women and children." These added, very likely doubled the numbers. And in both cases it is said, "they did all eat, and were filled." Comment on the significance and publicity of these performances were superfluous. They speak for themselves.

Now, in view of the general character and notorious publicity of the miracles of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament, what does your criticism amount to? When most of them were witnessed by multitudes, and some of them by thousands, what avails to say that two or three of them had only three or four witnesses? What avails to call any one of them a "trick"?

The truth is, there is no getting rid of the fact that these performances were nearly every one of them open to public view—in the face of friends and enemies—and were the result of superhuman agency, without charging the whole record with falsehood and fraud. Deception was out of the question.

You speak of the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus as "too thin." I like to be complimentary when I can, but I cannot conscientiously say that much for your criticism. There is not enough of it to amount even to *thinness*.

In reference to the New Testament records, you still talk of "traditions," and say that "tradition never makes a reliable record after 30 to 100 years." What avails it to talk thus, when these records have been traced back and shown to be the writings of those who record what they saw and heard and did? and of those immediately associated with them? Mat-

threw, and John, and Peter, and James, were of the original twelve apostles. They constantly attended the Savior from the commencement to the end of his ministry. They were specially chosen to be his witnesses, and as such testified in his behalf after his resurrection. In this labor they spent their lives. Their chief business was to proclaim to others what was within their personal knowledge, and persuade men to accept and follow their Master as a Teacher sent from God.

Suppose, now, that they *wrote down* nothing until near the close of their lives, and then made the record they did,—would such record be “tradition”—something handed down to them by word of mouth? Nay, verily. It would be recorded history, and the more reliable because of the *personal knowledge* of the writers. The other writers were their immediate associates, and their statements are corroborative.

Let me call your still more particular attention to the fact I have above hinted, that the writers of the New Testament simply record what had been their daily theme of thought and conversation and preaching for thirty or forty years. This is a strong consideration in favor of the accuracy of their statements, even upon the supposition—not admitted—that they were not inspired. Under such circumstances to hold that they have made essential misstatements of material facts, is to account them the veriest dolt or the veriest knaves. Were they either?

You deem you have occasion to complain that I have not paid due attention to your quotations from the Old Testament showing tyranny, persecution, etc. I think not. I held that it was your duty first to clear up the character of your God of creation. Having at last announced that you acknowledge no God who is responsible in the premises, I will say a word on the general subject, and notice a passage you quote.

Any system of government needs to be adapted to the characteristics and surroundings of the people who are subject to it. What would answer for an enlightened and cultivated people, would not be adapted to a people ignorant and rude. When Moses led the Hebrews up out of Egypt, they

had been held for generations in degrading bondage, and were imbruted by long servitude. Living among idolaters, they knew little of anything better and higher. It was the mission of Moses to lift them out of this condition, and his code of laws was framed to this end.

I can now refer to only one feature of this code—its leading feature, to wit:—*There is one God—Jehovah—on whom all are dependent, and to whom all are accountable. Ye shall have no other.* This was the supreme law, which they were required to accept and abide by. To go after other gods was made a capital offence and punished accordingly; and this leads me to notice the passage you quote, Deut. xiii: 6-11, which denounces death against any one who entices to idolatry.

This was not a matter of mere “conscientious belief,” as you suggest, but was an act of *treason and rebellion*, and as such it was to be punished. This law was rigid, and the punishment severe. You may call it “tyrannical.” I suppose it was necessary under the circumstances. Their history shows that this people were prone to idolatry. The experience through which they were made to pass, finally weaned them of this folly and sin.

As you believe in no such personal God, my explanation may not appear to you satisfactory. But neither do you believe in idolatry. And here let me call your attention to a very significant fact—a fact which should call forth the grateful acknowledgment of all intelligent skeptics. It is this:—*No system of religion, or morals, or philosophy except that of the Bible, has ever been able to make headway against Paganism, and its kindred abominations. The Bible has done this.*

I said in my last that the Bible does not deal harshly with those who have conscientious doubts. This you take to be a “remarkable assertion,” and quote against it two passages from the New Testament, which I will briefly notice:

II. John i: 10.—“If there come one unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor bid him

God speed." This passage I understand to have reference to the false teachers abroad—"deceivers." It means simply that they were not to be received nor countenanced *as such*. This, most certainly, is not persecution.

Mark xvi:16:—"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." This passage announces "damnation" as the consequence of unbelief, but does not indicate wherein such damnation consists. John iii:19, throws light on this point—"And this is the condemnation (damnation) that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

If men shut their eyes against the light of the Sun of Righteousness, they must expect to walk in moral darkness, and take the consequences. In this I see neither persecution nor injustice, more than is involved when one shuts his eyes against the light of the natural sun, and gropes his way in natural darkness. If men have doubts that are not "conscientious," and shut their eyes "because their deeds are evil," so much greater the culpability, and so much the worse for them.

You think Christianity has two sides—a bright side and a dark side. You war against the latter, and not against the former. I think the darkness largely attributable to your standpoint and the intervening clouds.

You deem that the atmosphere of Paganism would be an unsuitable one in which to live and raise a family. You had no opportunity of choosing what you would prefer. You would live, if you could, among a people whose time is taken up in making themselves as happy as possible in this world, without concern for the future. Allow me to ask, would it not be a joy to you, if called upon to part by death with wife, or son, or daughter, or other near relative, to feel assured, as the parting words are spoken, that the loved one is only going before you to a better land?

You confess your obligations to Christianity, but are sorry you "had no better chance." You, however, look for a

better time coming. I hope you will not be disappointed, though it will doubtless not be of the exact type you anticipate. I quote from your last as follows:

"Religious dogmas and religious people are becoming more tolerant in proportion as they are forced into a higher moral and rational atmosphere by the liberal and free-thought element now rapidly growing up in the world. Philosophical and scientific ideas are taking the lead, and will speedily revolutionize the theological world."

While the foregoing paragraph contains some truth, it also involves a most unfounded assumption. I confess that there is, and has been, not a little dogmatism, bigotry, and superstition, among the adherents of Christianity, Catholic and Protestant. This is attributable, not to Christianity itself, but partly to the corruptions of heathenism, and partly to the frailties of human nature.

I am glad to believe with you that this state of things is passing away. I am free to admit that this result is being brought about through increasing freedom of thought and inquiry,—by means of a careful study of the volume of Nature, as well as of the volume of Revelation. I hope this inquiry may go on. I have no fear of the result. It will, as heretofore, modify the interpretation of some passages of Scripture, and eliminate some theological errors; but Christianity, pure and simple, will shine with still brighter luster.

Whence, now, has come this liberal and free-thought element? You would infer that it has sprung up outside of the Christian church, and as an influence adverse to it. This I deny. In its main scope and best sense, it is the product of Christianity, whose spirit, in this respect, is expressed by the maxim of Paul, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." But like every other good thing, this freedom is liable to abuse, especially on the part of novices and of minds unevenly balanced.

Civil liberty is a good thing, but with some it becomes unbridled license. In its true and best sense, it acknowledges

the authority of law, and the need of order. Unrestrained, it is wild and reckless. So with the free-thought element of the intellectual and moral world. Within its legitimate sphere, it acknowledges the higher laws of mental, and moral, and physical being; and in aiming to find out what these laws are, and induce conformity to them, it works beneficent results. But when it ignores the existence of a Supreme Being and a spiritual world, and makes of man a mere animal, it grovels in the dust, and loses its highest power for good.

I would not be misunderstood. I do not claim that all of the liberal thought within the church is of the highest type, nor that all of such thought outside of it, is of the lowest type. In this matter, as in others, the inside and outside elements act and react on each other. What I do insist upon is, that the volume of the free-thought of the age is not outside of the church, but in it—its product and servant.

If you doubt my position, let me ask you to look around. Survey the whole field. Who and how many are the apostles of your peculiar faith, and where were they educated? Where are the schools of the prophets of skepticism, and what is the extent of their accommodations? Who founded them, and who has nurtured, and endowed and patronized them? If there are any such schools of note, the fact of their existence has escaped my notice.

But how in reference to schools of a different type? Who founded Bowdoin, and Dartmouth, and Amherst, and Harvard, and Brown, and Yale, and Meadville, and Antioch, and Kenyon, and Oberlin, and the scores of other institutions of similar character scattered over the country—east, west, north, and south? Who founded the time-honored universities of England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and the rest of Europe? Who has nurtured, and endowed, and patronized all of these schools of learning, and made them a success?

You know how these questions must be answered. The institutions I have named are the focal and radiating points of the highest philosophic and scientific culture, and of the best

liberal thought of the age; and to this day they have been under the fostering care and the sheltering wings of the church.

Now, until the devotees of skeptical free-thought have founded and built up *one* educational institution devoted to philosophy and science, and the higher branches of learning, and made it such a success as to compare favorably with schools of even a second grade already in existence, they should be very modest in intimating what they expect to accomplish in the way of revolutionizing the theological world.

As ever, yours truly.

JUNE 5, 1875.

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LETTER V.

A Contortion of Ideas—Crime Condemned—A Personal God Denied—Calamitous Events—Superhuman Power Denied—God a Myth—Prayer in General—Conscience and a Higher Power—No Escape from such Power.

FRIEND G.:—Various reasons, unnecessary to name, have delayed until now a response to your last communication, of the date of July 8, 1875. In this paper I propose to reply to only a part of it, and hope to respond to other parts with little delay. I quote from you as follows:

“You seem most curiously to argue that I cannot condemn crime and immorality without doing so on Bible grounds and the recognition of a personal God, and that therefore I should be a trespasser. This is a most remarkable contortion of ideas.”

Perhaps my language should have been somewhat qualified. I did not mean that you in express terms recognize a personal God, and I accept your assurance that you do condemn crime, without such recognition. In this I accord to you entire sincerity, while I cannot say so much for your consistency. Consider how this matter has come up between us.

You arraigned the Bible and its God on the ground, as you alleged, that they sanction tyranny, cruelty, war, and other enormities; and claimed that Nature is more beneficent, and teaches the opposite. I replied that the very things you complain of, with other terrible calamities, happen in the order of Nature, and called on you to account for these things before you thus arraigned the Bible. You responded that you asked no man to apologize for the ordeals of Nature.

I then called your attention to the fact that Nature includes man, and that all the experiences and works of man are part and parcel of the ordeals of Nature; and inquired whether murder, robbery, etc., are wrong—whether you condemn them. I held that you could not do so from the standpoint you had taken; that in doing so you came on Bible and theistic ground, where you had no right; that you were between the horns of a dilemma, and could not condemn these things, and still maintain that no apology is to be made for the ordeals of Nature. If there is any “contortion of ideas” in this matter, you will see that I am not responsible for it. I am simply stating your own positions and pointing out their inconsistency.

If now you abandon the ground that there is nothing in the ordeals of Nature that calls for apology, you will feel called upon, I trust, to solve the problem that lies directly in your pathway,—that is, to reconcile the calamitous events that happen to sentient existence, with your position that Nature is a more beneficent teacher than the Bible.

It is only necessary to indicate again some of the stubborn facts of history with which you are called upon to deal,—such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, and cyclones on land and water, famine, pestilence, and the like, swallowing up and sweeping away and burying cities, and populations, spreading desolation and ruin unutterable in their pathway.

Besides these, which happen more or less independently of human agency, there is a long black catalogue of evils which man brings upon himself and his fellow-man, in pursuing his selfish schemes and following the lead of his blind, unbridled passions,—such as tyranny, war, rapine, murder, drunkenness, seduction, and personal and social debauchery in all their debasing forms.

Survey the whole ground carefully. You will find, I think, no evils chronicled in the Bible, which are not duplicated in the history of the world outside of this record; and the catalogue of enormities in the latter, you will not fail to find longer and more sickening than in the former.

If you say that the Bible represents God as commanding the destruction of nations and individuals, I ask, is this worse, in effect or in principle, than that the same thing should happen in the order of Nature, without such command? Examine the Bible record, and you will find that when such destruction was ordered, it was done because those to be destroyed were low-sunken in idolatry and its pollutions, and to save the people who were to take their places from their contaminating example and influence. And this accords with the order of Nature as revealed in all history,—that when a nation has filled the measure of its iniquities it shall perish, and make room for a better people.

Bear in mind that, if the Bible is true, God is supreme,—the author of life, and the rightful arbiter of all its issues. Bear in mind, also, that this Book of books represents him as the Father of all humanity, with all that this relation implies; that it reveals to the world the fact that, while for reasons we cannot fathom, or can only dimly see, he has permitted evil to exist, he has also provided a remedial plan, whose scope and purpose are to overcome all evil with good, rectify all wrong, and provide for his great family an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

In connection with the above, I call attention to your denial of any superhuman power. You say, "And upon the subject of morality and human government, I regard no power higher than human agency." You defy me, and the whole religious world, to produce a "sample" of any greater or higher power. The kind of power you mean is indicated by the illustration you present,—that of the armies of Christian nations fighting against each other. Of the combatants you say:

"They pray to the same God in the same language, with honest faith and fervor that their prayers shall be answered; but yet there is no God, no help on either side, except what comes from human strength and human agency; and here comes the overwhelming proof of human reason, that your God is a myth."

Hardly so. Your premises and conclusion are not very nearly related. There is a great deal of ground not covered by the former. Those who credit the Bible record on the subject, need no further proof that such superhuman power exists. As you are not of this number, you cannot, for the time, be reached through it.

In reference to the test you propose, I will simply say here, that I suppose there is a Scriptural sense in which God hears and answers prayer, without in every case granting the particular thing sought. Certainly no intelligent Christian claims that God will hear all manner of petitions, and grant all manner of inconsistent and unreasonable things sought at his hand. While, therefore, I shall not attempt to produce such a "sample" as you demand, I will call your attention to a consideration which will come nearer to your own consciousness, and which I am sure you may well ponder.

You say you do "condemn crime." Allow me to ask why? On what ground do you condemn it? Suppose you answer this as to one kind of crime—murder. If you say you condemn murder because it is wrong, do you not imply a standard or law which makes it wrong? A law which makes the act of murder wrong, implies a power higher than that of the murderer to which he is amenable. Where is this power, and what is it? Do you say it is the power of the State, and that the State condemns it? I ask, does State law make murder wrong? Or, does the State condemn it because it is wrong? Would the act be wrong if committed on a lone island; out of the jurisdiction of any human law? If so, where and what is the power which makes it wrong?

If you say the human conscience condemns it, I ask, Does the condemnation of conscience make it wrong? Or, does conscience condemn it because it is wrong? If you admit that the human conscience condemns murder because it is wrong, independent of all human law or authority, do you not by implication you cannot avoid, admit that there is a power higher than any human power or agency, to which such conscience acknowledges itself amenable?

Let me appeal to your own consciousness. You "do condemn crime." Do you condemn murder simply on the ground that the law makes it criminal? I am sure you do not. Why, then? Simply in response to a voice from within. You have an inward monitor to which you give ear. Deep down in your nature is planted a moral sense—a faculty or element of your being which recognizes that some moral actions are right and others are wrong—a conscience. This monitor, informed by your judgment, pronounces murder a crime, and you respond, Amen. You cannot do otherwise. From the decision of this monitor there is no appeal. Why? Because it is an infallible echo of the decision of a higher tribunal. Conscience is the vicegerent of a higher power. And now, aside from all other proof, is it not a reasonable presumption that this higher power is a personal God,—a God omnipotent, the creator of all beings and of all worlds,—and as such, the rightful moral governor of the universe?

What I mean by "infallible" as applied to conscience, is this:—Conscience always approves of what is known or believed to be right, and always condemns what is known or believed to be wrong, in moral conduct. In this it never mistakes. Whoever is observant of his own mental experiences, needs no higher proof of this than his own consciousness. Conscience holds you and me, and every moral being, to a responsibility from which we feel there is no escape. I may well ask, How could such a sense of responsibility be impressed upon the universal human conscience, if there be indeed no higher power to hold it responsible?

In further confirmation of the existence of such higher power, let me call your attention to the penalty which inevitably follows the commission of crime, and, indeed, of every violation of the dictates of conscience.

As my appeal is to human consciousness—and especially to your own—I say nothing now of any penalty which relates, or may be supposed to relate, to a future world; nor of that dread of exposure to the public gaze and scorn, which is so powerful in the minds of all wrong-doers who would hold the

esteem of others, and who sink to the earth when the light reveals their deeds; nor to that painful apprehension of extraneous penalty which those suffer who have broken human laws.

I call your attention to the simple fact that every such violation inflicts a poisonous sting in the moral nature of the transgressor,—a sting whose essential damage is not in the pain it produces, but in the poison it imparts. The wrong act debases. It produces a sense of shame and guilt—a feeling of moral unworthiness—under which the transgressor cowers.

This penal infliction is more or less pungent according as the moral nature of the man has been more or less cultivated and enlightened on the one hand, or brutalized and blunted on the other. In its own nature it is inevitable. It does its work in the dark and in the bosom of the offender, where no mortal eye can penetrate. Such offender, however, much against his will, must carry his avenger with him wherever he goes. Now, if there be no higher power than human agency, why is he thus held? Why is it that neither his own, nor any other human hand, can de'iver him?

Very truly yours,

MAY 26, 1877.

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LETTER VI.

The Origin of Man, and Paternity of Jesus—No Proper First Man—Some Nonsensical Questions—Man and Monkey—A Theory—Man Must Have Existed from all Eternity, or There Must Have Been a First Man—The Bible Account.

FRIEND G:—A few words more seem appropriate in reference to the question of the origin of man, in connection with the paternity of Jesus of Nazareth. You will pardon me, I trust, for saying that I am not a little amused at the trouble this question seems to give you, and your evident dread to attempt any solution of it.

You objected to the Bible record that Jesus was born of a virgin, insisting that it could not be, as it was contrary to Nature that a human being should come into existence without a natural father. I inquired how the first man came into being—whether he had a natural father; and, if not, whether he came into the world contrary to Nature. You first said you did not believe there ever was a first man. This answer was, of course, unexpected. In my simplicity, I supposed you believed there was a time in the distant past, when no human being existed upon the earth, and would admit this, and undertake to somehow account for man's first appearance. I was mistaken.

Answering as you did, to meet a possible view you might take on the score of numbers, I put the question in the plural,—How came the first men? This is your answer:—"I do not believe there ever was a being on earth that could properly be called the first man."

This is your first answer, with a qualification. It is *misty*. It seems to admit, by way of inference, that the race has had a beginning on earth; that some kind of "being," who could not "properly" be called the first man, stood at the initial point of humanity, as its ancestor. I am very curious to know something as definite as possible of this our common progenitor,—not to say parent, for that is rather too endearing an appellation, until more light is thrown upon his character.

You are not in the habit of using words that cloud your meaning. You are generally frank and outspoken. If you have any clear ideas on this subject, let me have them in unmistakable language. Who was this ancestor, and how did he come? Was he the first of his kind? Had he a natural father? If not, did he come into being contrary to nature? If not, how did he come? Again:—Not being a "proper" man, did he beget a son who was a proper man? If not, how far down the line of his posterity do we come before we find a proper man? And when we find him, do we not find the "first man" of the race? And do we not find a man who has come into being "contrary to nature," as we observe her operations—a man without a natural father? Recollect that in relation to Jesus you ask:—"If paternity is the universal rule, then is it not first necessary to prove an exception?" I return the interrogatory for your consideration.

You will excuse me if some of the questions I ask seem nonsensical. I am endeavoring to find out your meaning. To my apprehension, to talk of an improper man is to talk nonsense. A man is a man; a monkey is a monkey; neither is part one and part the other, and "properly" neither man nor monkey. A man never begets a monkey, nor a monkey a man; neither does one grow into the other—so far as we know.

You will allow me to suggest what I suppose may be your theory, which I do, as follows:—Man has come into being as he is, by virtue of a process of development, or evolution, from primordial matter through some, or all, of the lower orders of animals up to the highest, supposed to be the monkey; and some of the monkey-tribe, after a long process of cultivation

and endeavor after a higher form of being and quality of life, acquired a modicum of the elements of manhood, and grew in these through the same process, until they became "proper men." The change from monkey to man was so gradual, and so imperceptible as it went on—running, perhaps, through long ages—that it is impossible to tell where one began, and where the other ended. As the monkey waned out the man waxed in. At last, the monkey was gone, and the man was here. And so it is: man has come into being through such a process that it is impossible to say who was the first man, or who were the first men, or whether there ever were such. From the standpoint of such a theory, your answer does not seem very unreasonable.

But what of the theory? To me it seems absurd. But I do not pretend to be well enough acquainted with Nature to condemn it unqualifiedly. Of this I am sure, that, while I do not know it is false, you do not know it is true. And, moreover, we both know it is not in accordance with the operations of Nature, as we observe them. Animals breed their kind; and, as you say, "Figs do not grow on thistles."

But, suppose it true, what bearing has it on the question of the paternity of Jesus? Of course, they have no natural relation to each other. I ask the question simply in reference to the point you have raised. If you hold or admit, that the human family had its origin away back and away down in some monkey-tribe, so that originally man came into existence through a process—longer or shorter—in a way entirely different from that we now observe, when every man is begotten by a father like himself—why should you think it incredible that so extraordinary a personage as Jesus should have been begotten in an extraordinary manner? If you go no higher than Nature, is it not possible that he may have been begotten without a natural father, through some process of Nature not revealed to us? And if we rise above Nature to a personal God, the Supreme Power, and the source of all law, the problem is relieved of all difficulty, and becomes a simple question of fact.

In laboring to get rid of the difficulty you encounter, you endeavor to throw the burden of proof on me. Objecting to the position that Jesus was born of a virgin, and assuming that it is a universal rule that every man born into the world is the offspring of a natural father, you call on me to point out an exception. This I have done, and do, in the case of "the first man"; and without going to the Bible, I may confidently appeal to the common sense and common judgment of the world, that the first man came into existence without a natural father like himself, and of course out of the ordinary course of Nature, as we observe it.

Your attempt to get rid of this exception is futile, whether your theory is what I have suggested, or some other. Unless the human family has existed from all eternity—which you will not venture to affirm, and which no one believes—there was a time in the past when it had its origin,—a time when the "first man," or the "first men" appeared, with no such paternity. To confront this proposition is to confront common sense; and until you can dispose of such exception, may you not well abate your confident assumption that Jesus could not have been born without a natural father?

In this connection you attack, in the way of ridicule, what you assume to be my view of the origin of man,—stating it in substance as follows:—It came about some six thousand years ago, near the garden of Eden. It was the work of God, but not alone, who said, "Let us make man." Then and there man was "made of mud," "bricked out." This you account "a most degraded origin." Such a representation would come from you with a better grace, if you could point to something higher.

I accept the account in Genesis as a true record of the substantial facts of the creation of the world, and the origin of man. As to the *manner* of such creation and origin, I think the representations are not to be interpreted literally. To my mind, the account is largely allegorical, but none the less reliable and significant.

Aside, now, from the mode of man's origin—about which

you seem to be in the dark—let me inquire of you as to his substantial nature—his bodily substance, I mean; and this, I understand you to hold, is all there is of him. Of what is he composed? Is he not “of the earth, earthy”? And when he dies, does not this body “return to the earth as it was”? You can give but one answer to these questions. You concur, then, in the sentence of the Bible:—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” If it suits you better, as applicable to your views, to substitute “mud” for “dust,” I shall not object. And so in the quotation you give from Mr. Putnam, in which, treating of human destiny, he expresses strong doubt of any future existence for man. Upon the supposition that there will be no such existence, he says:—“There is no annihilation, for the soul of the universe is regnant in the dust.” I hardly think it would have suited your taste, if in this quotation you had found “mud” instead of “dust.”

We agree and we differ. We agree as to man’s body—from dust to dust. With you, this life is the “be all and end all” of human existence. With me it is not. Man has a spiritual being which survives the body, and finds its home in a spiritual world of ever-enduring life, and beauty, and joy. May I not exhort you to look for an ultimate destiny for man higher than you can find in mud or dust?

Yours truly,

JULY, 21, 1877.

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LETTER VII

Immorality ascribed to the Bible—The Virgin Mary—Old Testament Representations—Certain Passages Considered—All in Favor of Virtue, Cleanliness and Decency.

FRIEND G.:—I propose, in this communication, to consider your arraignment of the Bible on the score of its demoralizing social influence, and its vulgarity. Because of the account it gives of the paternity of Jesus, you endeavor to fix on it the stigma of immorality, thus:

“Why do you not offer proof in support of this outlandish and unnatural pretension—this monstrous idea of voluptuousness? It is inconsistent with purity, morality, virtue, or honesty. It is absolutely shocking to common decency. If such an idea should gain in practice with the people generally, it would utterly destroy the virtue, harmony, and peace of society. The marriage relations as they now exist would be regarded as utterly worthless,” etc.

If you will take pains to compare what you thus say with the Bible statements, you will see that you place to its account what belongs only to your own imaginings. The Bible attributes the paternity of Jesus to the sole agency of the Divine Spirit—to the Holy Ghost, as our translation has it. This you assume to be false, and claim—covertly in what I quote, and expressly in what I omit—that Jesus was the illegitimate offspring of a natural father. When, therefore, you express horror—as I am glad you do—in view of the demoralization which must prevail, “if such an idea should

gain practice," you must recollect that it is *your* "idea," and not that of the Bible.

As the mother of Jesus, Mary is enshrined in the heart of Christendom as a spotless virgin; and you will not pretend that any actual demoralization of human society has resulted from a belief in the record as we have it. The idea that this Mary stands as the representative of the class you indicate, to use your own language, "is absolutely shocking to common decency." If you have had any serious apprehensions that her example will demoralize the virgins of this or any coming generation, you may safely quiet your mind on the subject.

In this connection, I will say a word about the moral character you ascribe to the Old Testament representations, and particularly to the laws of Moses. You say:

"You admit that Moses made rude and vulgar laws to reach and accommodate his very low and imbruted people. You are right."

You are mistaken. I said nothing about "rude and vulgar laws." I said, "what would answer for a cultivated and enlightened people, would not be adapted to a people ignorant and rude;" and that the people for whom Moses made laws, "were imbruted by long servitude." Speaking of the law against idolatry, I said it was rigid, and its punishment severe, but I supposed this was necessary under the circumstances.

In this matter, you fall into an error akin to that I have noticed in the case of the virgin Mary. You attribute to the laws enacted to govern a rude people, what belongs only to the people themselves, and to the offences the laws are enacted to correct. It is an obvious principle that a law made to correct a given offence, must be in character the opposite of the offence. If you read the Bible in disregard of this rule, your error is not to be wondered at, but it is none the less unfortunate.

I suppose one ground of your objection is found in the language used. It should be borne in mind that vulgarity is attributable to the *animus* of an utterance, rather than to its words. You are aware what a special significance is some-

times given to a word or phrase by the manner in which it is uttered. You have often noticed how words, uttered by one person with perfect propriety and delicacy, have been repeated by another in such a manner as to give them a vulgar turn. You have also noticed that a person habitually vulgar-minded, instinctively gives such a turn to what he reads whenever he can.

Of course, some words are objectionable in themselves, and should ever be avoided. But some that now, and with us, are accounted improper, were not so regarded in former times, and among a different people. In regard to those which are susceptible of such meaning, but do not in themselves convey it, much depends on time, and place, and circumstances. What would be highly improper under some circumstances, may become indispensable under others.

Governments find it necessary, in order to preserve social order and the purity of the family relations, to declare certain acts affecting them criminal offences. These acts must be defined in precise terms, which may require the use of such language as would be highly indelicate in common conversation, and especially in a circle of refined people. The same may be said of the language necessarily used in court, in cases of trial for breaches of these laws. This remark applies with full force to certain provisions of the Mosaic code.

In one of your communications you cited, as specially objectionable, some passages of this character, inquiring whether they were inspired, etc. Bearing in mind the suggestions above made, let me request you to look over all the passages of the character in question, which you can find; and forgetting, so far as possible, that you have ere this formed any opinion in regard to them, endeavor to ascertain their scope and purpose. I think you will not find one you can honestly say was intended to promote immorality or any kind of vulgarity, or that can possibly have such effect without perversion. Most of those in the form of laws, you will find in the chapters cited below. Peruse them carefully:

Exodus xxii; Leviticus xii, xv, xviii, xix, xx, xxi; Numbers, v; Deuteronomy, xxii, xxiii, xxiv.

Considering the character and circumstances of the people, it need not be thought a matter of wonder that there are here found some very singular provisions, and some which run into minute details. They concern chiefly the domestic and social relations; and whatever may be thought of them otherwise, they are all in favor of virtue, cleanliness, and decency,—of personal, domestic, and social purity. In their intent and purpose, they are at the farthest possible remove from anything sensual or vulgar. Modern civilization, indeed, may find in some of them useful lessons. Whether inspired or not, they are wholesome; and that cause must be hard pressed for arguments, to support it, which seeks in its aid, to give them an opposite character.

There are other passages scattered throughout the Old Testament, which may be supposed, as to their language and moral bearings, to stand in the same category with those referred to. I will specify one which seems to stand out in bold relief. I refer to the twenty-third chapter of Ezekiel, in which the idolatries and the attendant wickedness of the people of Jerusalem and Samaria, are graphically portrayed and denounced—the latter being personated by Aholah and the former by Aholibah.

According to the Bible, Jehovah chose the Hebrews from among the nations to be his peculiar people. He is represented as sustaining to them a most sacred relation—that of husband. They are said to be “avouched” to each other (Deut. xxvi: 17-18). Accordingly, in the chapter I have cited, Jehovah is represented as saying of Aholah and Aholibah, “They were mine,” and then accusing them of unfaithfulness. They had “played the harlot” with the Egyptians and the Assyrians. In other words, forsaking his worship and service, they had become the worshipers of the gods of these nations, and fallen into their “abominable customs.” For this wickedness the severest punishments are denounced against them.

It is a fact notorious in history, profane as well as sacred,

that all manner of violations of the marital and other domestic and social relations, abound excessively among Pagan nations. This was the crowning iniquity of the nations which the Hebrews supplanted, and on account of which, as we are told, the land vomited them out (Lev. chaps. xviii, xx).

The Hebrews were prohibited from going after idols, not only because it was rebellion against Jehovah, not only because it was base ingratitude, in view of special favors shown them, but also because of its debasing associations,—opening, as it did and does, the flood-gates of licentiousness, and giving loose rein to all the baser passions of human nature.

By what more significant symbols, then, could the gross idolatry of Jerusalem and Samaria, and its baleful results, be set forth than by two such abandoned women as Aholah and Aholibah? women who, after a long course of shameless infidelity, are stripped of their meretricious adornments, mutilated in face and body, laughed to scorn by their paramours, and at last ignominiously stoned to death?

Notice the intent of these representations: "Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land and ye shall bear the sins of your idols, and ye shall know that I am the Lord God," (verses 48-49). To my mind, such portrayal is a wonderful illustration of that unwavering warfare against all iniquity, in high places and low; of that insight into human nature which apprehends the motives to wrong, with its beginnings, and process, and out-come; of that alert care which warns against the snares of temptation; of that stern justice which decrees that those who transgress "shall eat of the fruit of their own way"; and of that merciful interposition which so administers chastisement as to teach men the knowledge of the Lord, and the way of right,—all of which stand forth conspicuously throughout the Old and New Testaments, and give evidence of wisdom from above.

As ever, yours,

AUGUST 4, 1877.

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LETTER VIII.

Miracles—Contemporaneous Proof—Authors—An Extended View—The Story of the Cross Told Everywhere, in the Presence of Friends and Foes—No Record of Contemporaneous Disproof or Denial—Too Late Now.

FRIEND G.:—Once more, as to miracles. You object to the Bible account of miracles, because, as you allege, what are therein recorded as such, could not have taken place, as they are contrary to Nature, and impossible. You refer to the fact that miracles are alleged in support of all great religions, and inquire which are the true. In answer, I point you to those mentioned in the New Testament, and say that I regard none as the true, but such as are performed through the aid of superhuman power. You refer to a few of those mentioned in the New Testament, and aim to show that they were wrought "away from observation," "in private," and with little opportunity of testing their truth. I show that your criticism is unfounded; that these miracles were many; that they were generally wrought in the presence of multitudes—sometimes thousands—under such circumstances that there could have been no possible deception; and that there is no way of evading their force, but by impeaching the record as a fraud.

How do you meet this testimony? By calling on me to prove it true. You would have me prove my proof. You ask, "Do you know of any contemporaneous writings that support the truth of these miracles?" and add, "If you have no testimony to offer, the case is, of course, against you."

You have an easy way, indeed, of deciding the question in your favor. It does not seem to have occurred to you, that when a case is supported by direct and ample testimony, it is to be regarded as true, unless the evidence adduced is successfully impeached. I make out a case in favor of the miracles of the New Testament, supported by an array of testimony which cannot, probably, be equaled in favor of any alleged facts of equal antiquity; and now, instead of showing that the testimony adduced does not prove the miracles in question to be genuine, you attempt to discredit them by citing in long array a multitude of pretended miracles which you believe to be frauds—putting them all on a level. You can just as easily prove that a gold eagle is not genuine, by exhibiting a hundred which you acknowledge to be spurious. What you have to do in the premises is to prove the whole record a fraud, or to discredit the individual witnesses. Unable to do either, should you not yield the case?

You seem to suppose I want you to prove a negative. I neither ask nor expect this. Nevertheless, you think you have done it, not only in your array of spurious miracles, but in claiming that “contemporaneous” proof of those of the New Testament cannot be adduced. Suppose such proof cannot be had, how are you helped? Your negative is not thereby proved, nor is the affirmative disproved.

In your attempt to establish your negative, I notice your reference to authors—Seneca, Pliny, Lardner, DuPin, Warburton, LeMoine, Mosheim, Dubois, Cooper, the editor of “Official Memoirs,” and Moore, and what you say of the Grecian, Italian, Hindoo, and Mohammedan miracles

By such references, you endeavor to make it appear that there exists no contemporary proof of the miracles of the New Testament; that the time to which these miracles are assigned was one of great ignorance; that other religions have been attested by miracles as wonderful and as credible; and that credence given to any of them is unfounded.

I suppose your quotations from authors are second-hand, and that, like myself, you have not access to the originals.

They may or may not be correct, in whole or in part.— However this may be, I am sure they involve nothing that can invalidate the evidence on which the New Testament miracles rest,—which I shall endeavor more fully to show —first taking note of the following points suggested by your references :

1. The preternatural darkness and earthquake, at the time of the crucifixion of Christ, may have been entirely local, seen and felt only in Palestine; but even if they were more general, the fact that Seneca and Pliny made no note of them, as you allege, is no proof that they did not occur.

2. Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate, who, as governor under Roman authority, reported his acts to the Emperor, to be placed among the public archives. These acts of Pilate, it is alleged, embraced an account of the life and miracles, and of the death and resurrection of Christ. True, they are not now extant; but we have references to them which can be accounted for only on the admission of their existence. About the year 140, Justin Martyr wrote an "Apology for the Christians," which was presented to the Emperor and Senate of Rome, in which, after mentioning the crucifixion of Christ, and attendant circumstances, he says, "And that these things were so done, you may know from the acts made in the time of Pontius Pilate." About the year 200, Turtullian wrote a like apology, in which he says, "Of all these things relating to Christ, Pilate himself, already a Christian in his conscience, sent an account to Tiberias, then Emperor. At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, the land was darkened at noonday; which wonder is related in your own annals, and is preserved in your archives to this day." To suppose they would thus appeal to a public record when no such record existed, and thus give their enemies an opportunity to convict them of falsehood, is to attribute to them the veriest folly.

I note your suggestion of fraud in connection with such evidence. The light I have leads me to the conclusion that the weight of authority is against any such fraud. If the

apologies referred to state the truth, we here have "contemporaneous" proof of the highest character.

3. You claim that at the date of the New Testament, "the conditions were very favorable to the performance of miracles," on account of the ignorance, superstition, and corruption of the people. I doubt whether that age was peculiar in such manner. Says a learned writer, "It happened very providentially, to the honor of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark and illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and the chief happiness of reasonable creatures."

And does it not look very unreasonable to disparage, on such grounds, an era of the world in or near which such illustrious personages as Julius Cæsar, Cicero, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Livy, Seneca, Pliny and Tacitus, lived and flourished? On the contrary, it was an age of profound thought, and of great intelligence on the part of those who took the lead in public affairs, and gave shape to public opinion. And, moreover, however unlearned the masses may have been, they generally had a sufficient share of intelligence to discern, and of common sense to judge, whether such miracles as those described in the New Testament, had been performed before their eyes or not.

4. The New Testament miracles were performed, not only in the presence of those friendly or indifferent, and who might or might not have been very credulous; but also in the presence of bitter enemies, who were eagle-eyed, and on the alert to detect any fraud, and take advantage of any prejudice they could bring to bear against those who wrought them.

5. As an objection to the genuineness of the New Testament miracles, it does not meet the demands of sound logic to allege, in a general way, that miracles are impossible; that all religions are based upon them; that the adherents of these religions respectively claim and believe that the miracles

alleged in favor of their own are genuine; and that all who give them credence are alike ignorant or superstitious. To do this, is to beg the question.

The truth is, every claim of the kind must stand on its own merits. In a given case, we must find the facts; and, accounting for them as we may, we must accept the conclusions which they compel. To do otherwise, is to dishonor our reason. Our concern is with the Bible miracles. As to these we differ; as to others we do not.

Let me ask you, now, in connection with this question of contemporaneous proof, to take a somewhat extended view of the situation as it existed.

According to the record we have, the ministry of Jesus, including his teaching, his miracles, his crucifixion, burial and resurrection—covering a period of some three years—produced the most intense excitement throughout Palestine. It aroused the closest attention of the ruling classes among the Jews, and excited their bitterest opposition. After the resurrection, the disciples were in like manner opposed and persecuted.

Before his ascension, Jesus commanded his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, first tarrying at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. They did so, and continued the work so committed to them during their natural lives. The result is matter of history, profane as well as sacred.

Within the life-time of the apostles, and a few succeeding years, this new religion made its way far and wide, and found a foothold in all the principal cities and countries of Western Asia, and Northern Africa, and Eastern and Southern Europe. Opposition was everywhere encountered, and often bitter persecution, involving stripes, imprisonment and death. The enemies of Christianity—Jew and Pagan—left no means of stopping its progress untried. The instigators and leaders of this opposition were among the keenest-sighted and shrewdest men of the age, and would not have failed to put their hands on the most effective weapons within their reach.

Now, how did the apostles, and their co-laborers and immediate followers, attain such success? They did it by obeying the injunction, "Preach the gospel." They told the simple story of the cross. They preached Christ and him crucified—Jesus and the resurrection. In so doing, we cannot doubt, they narrated and repeated and insisted upon, the leading facts of Christ's history as they are recorded in the New Testament. They rehearsed the precepts and doctrines he announced; told how he healed the sick, and restored the lame, and blind, and deaf; how he raised the dead; how he fed the multitudes; and how, according to his own prediction, he died and rose again. The apostles themselves, no doubt, told these things as what they had seen and heard and knew. They did this fearless of contradiction. They were bold to say, as Paul did before Agrippa, "This thing was not done in a corner." And what should be specially noted is, that they did this "beginning at Jerusalem," where the leading events occurred.

Under the circumstances, what would have been more natural than for the enemies of Christianity, if they had doubted the truth of what these men proclaimed, to make a searching inquiry into the matter, and if they could, such an exposure of the imposition as would have confounded and silenced the impostors? This could easily have been done.

Bear in mind that the Jewish people were scattered throughout the region of the apostles' travels, and they encountered them nearly everywhere they went. Those abroad kept up a close intimacy with their brethren at Jerusalem, and were familiar with the recent history of their nation. They, therefore, must have known, or could easily have found out, whether these men were impostors, and leading the multitudes of their followers to accept a religion founded on the grossest fraud.

Bear in mind, also, that the alleged miracles were of such a character that they could not have been otherwise than notorious,—such as the healing of all manner of diseases in great numbers; the raising from the dead of Lazarus and the widow's son; the feeding, at different times, of four and five

thousand men, besides women and children, with a few small loaves and fishes; and, at last, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus,—all alleged to have been in the presence of numerous witnesses, who are often spoken of as “many people,” “multitudes,” etc.

Bear in mind, further, that these alleged witnesses were living while the apostles were engaged in promulgating their story. Many of them, doubtless, were not of the number of the disciples, and would have been ready to deny, if called upon, that they had ever witnessed such miracles; and besides these, and besides the disciples, there were others, among the Jews, at Jerusalem and elsewhere, during the latter years of the apostles’ ministry, and a few years succeeding, who could not have witnessed the miracles, if performed, but who would have been good witnesses to testify, if such was the fact, that there was no current belief among their people that their fathers ever witnessed them, or that they were ever wrought. How easy it would have been to procure such testimony, and how instinctively would the enemies of the gospel—especially those of Jewish connection—have seized such a weapon, if within their reach? Have we evidence that anything of the kind was done or attempted?

Further. Consider the situation after the apostles had made their record. Not only had their opposers abundant opportunity, during the years of their personal oral ministry, of confronting them and showing that they were deceivers and falsifiers—if indeed they were—but after the narrations were written, these opposers, and others who succeeded them, had the best of opportunities, and the strongest motives, for impeaching their record, and making one of their own, which should go into history and be handed down as a standing refutation of the other. The leading occurrences alleged are stated as notorious facts, and so stated as to invite the boldest denial on the part of any who questioned their truth.

With such opportunities for detection, and such motives for exposure, is it not most remarkable, upon the supposition that these miracles were never wrought, that we have no “contem-

poraneous" denial of them? And if those who had such motives for denial made none, can others do it at this late day without disparaging their own good sense?

Truly yours,

AUGUST 11, 1877.

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LETTER IX.

**The Crucifixion and Resurrection—The Record in the Gospels and in the Acts
—The Conspirators Baffled—Confusion of the Rulers—The Undisputed
Record, Proof.**

FRIEND G.—In my last communication I spoke of the miracles of the New Testament in general. Continuing the subject in the present, I wish to speak of the account given of two leading events,—the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ, with their attendant circumstances.

The Crucifixion, as you know, is said to have taken place at Jerusalem, while Pontius Pilate was governor, and at the time of the Passover, one of the great annual feasts of the Jews, when vast multitudes were there assembled, not only from Palestine, but from all the neighboring countries into which the Jews had become scattered. These multitudes constituted a cloud of witnesses in whose presence the deed was done. Notice two significant occurrences connected with the transaction.

1. The recognition and proclamation of Jesus as king of the Jews by the Roman governor. Although Pilate, to satisfy the cry of the Jews for vengeance, delivered Jesus to be crucified as a malefactor, he confessed his innocence, and proclaimed him king of the Jews. He not only declared he found "no fault in him"; not only "took water and washed his hands before the multitude saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person"; but in a most remarkable and public manner he

indorsed his claim as king,—“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.” When the chief priests saw it, their pride of nation was stung to the quick, and they immediately appealed to Pilate,—“Write not the King of the Jews, but that he said, I am the King of the Jews.” Pilate returned the laconic answer—“What I have written, I have written.” (John xix: 19-22, and parallel passages.) Thus accused before the nations of procuring the death of their rightful sovereign, these Jews had the strongest motive, when these narratives were published, for denying their truth. Have we any evidence that they did do so?

2. The record of three hours of preternatural darkness, of the earthquake, of the rending of the veil of the temple, and of the resurrection of many bodies of the saints. (Matt. xxvii: 51-53, and parallel passages.) If these things occurred as related, they can be accounted as nothing less than miraculous attestations, in the presence of the assembled multitudes, of the momentous significance of the event. If they did not occur, how easily the narratives could have been confuted! Have we evidence of any attempt to confute them?

Perhaps no event recorded in profane history is represented as having equal notoriety. Nothing in the history of our country has ever transpired in a more conspicuous manner,—not even the death of President Lincoln—assassinated in a public assembly a few days after his second inauguration. What would you think of a denial, at the present day, that the latter event ever took place? You do not believe that such a denial will be made a hundred years hence. It would be vain. And equally vain would have been a denial of the crucifixion of Christ a hundred years after it took place.

I now call your attention to the account we have of the Resurrection of Christ,—especially to the evidence we have of the fact aside from the mere word of his disciples. You have spoken of this event as “in private,” and of the record itself as “too thin.” Jesus had foretold both his death and his resurrection. This had come to the knowledge of the Jewish

rulers. Having procured the one, to get him out of the way, they knew they would still fail of their end unless they could prevent the other, or counteract its effects. This they were on the alert to do, as this record shows.

On their application to Pilate, the stone at the door of the sepulchre was sealed, and a watch of Roman soldiers was furnished to guard it. (Matt. xxvii: 62-65.) And yet the seal was broken, the stone was rolled away, and the body disappeared. Some of the frightened watch fled to the city and reported to the chief priests what was done. The priests, after assembling with the elders and taking counsel, bribed the soldiers to say that the disciples of Jesus came by night and stole him away while they slept. Matthew says, "They took the money and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." (Matt. xxviii: 11-15.)

This account is absurd on its face. The soldiers do not say that they saw the disciples at all. They say the disciples stole him by night while they slept. Of course, if they were asleep, they could not know whether the body of Jesus was stolen, or whether he arose and came forth alive. Besides, the improbability of their being asleep is heightened by the fact that they were liable to the penalty of death for sleeping when on guard.

Matthew's own account is at entire variance with this—
"And behold there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matt. xxviii: 2-6.)

What I wish you to particularly notice here, is the allegation of Matthew, that the saying which the priests bribed the soldiers to put out, was current when he wrote his Gospel. This is supposed by some to have been but eight or ten years

after the event of the crucifixion, while others suppose it to have been later, but not more than twenty-eight or thirty years after.

When his record appeared and was seen by the rulers, they found themselves accused of falsehood and bribery; and along with this accusation, they were confronted with evidence that he whose crucifixion they had compassed, and whose resurrection or removal from the sepulchre they had endeavored to prevent, was actually risen from the dead, and had become the rallying center of his former disciples, and of multitudes more who were flocking to his standard.

Either this saying had been in vogue, as Matthew affirms, or it had not. If it had not obtained currency among their people--and Matthew affirms that it was "*commonly* reported"—these rulers could easily have proved it false; and having convicted him of falsehood in this particular, they would have shown him unworthy of belief in the essential averments of his record.

Impelled by the strong motives which they must have had to vindicate themselves or their predecessors, and to strike a damaging blow against an order of things which bid fair to supplant their own, can we imagine any reason why they did not, other than that the facts were against them, and they knew that denial must be unavailing? Is not silence on their part a confession of the truth of Matthew's record, and of their own wrong?

I now call your attention to the evidence we have in the first chapters of the acts of the Apostles of the truth of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ—especially of the latter. I refer not to the naked testimony of the Apostles, but more particularly to the emphasis given to such testimony by the place and time, and the manner and circumstances of its delivery; and by the presence of those in whose hearing it was delivered, and the remarkable attendant attestations.

I have already noted the fact that the Apostles were directed to begin their mission as witnesses for Christ at Jerusalem. The record shows that they did so by public proclama-

ation on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the feast of the Passover, at which the crucifixion took place.

Upon the supposition that the story of the cross is a fiction—and especially that the allegation that the resurrection of Christ is a falsehood—how do you account for the fact that the first public proclamation thereof was made at such time and place—made on the spot where the events are said to have occurred, and before vast multitudes of people who must have witnessed the crucifixion, if it took place, and who had the best possible opportunities of finding out whether the story of the resurrection was true or false?

Men who practice a wicked fraud, and especially one which they mean to perpetuate, do not voluntarily and at once place themselves in a situation the most favorable for detection and exposure. If the leader of these Apostles was an impostor, Jerusalem would have been the last place, and the chosen occasion the last time, for such a beginning; but if otherwise, the time and place were most fitting. And does it not seem evidence of Divine wisdom that such place was pre-appointed, and such time chosen?

In noting the manner of the delivery of their testimony on this occasion, it is interesting to take into account their previous state of mind and demeanor, and the experience through which they had passed. Up to the time of the resurrection, they seem not to have well understood the teaching of their Master, and to have failed to comprehend the character of the mission in which they were to be prominent actors. They were troubled with doubts and fears, were timid and shrinking; and in the last fearful trial of their leader they all forsook him and fled.

But when the day of Pentecost came, how great was the change which came over the feeble band of unlettered Galilee fishermen! At once, the scenes through which they had passed came vividly to their minds; at once, the sayings and instructions of their Master were revealed in new light: at once, the dawn of the new dispensation, on whose threshold they stood, greeted their vision; at once, they comprehended

—if not perfectly, yet in a good degree—the nature of the kingdom in which their crucified and risen Lord was to reign. and in which they were to be his chief ministers; at once, they were inspired with new faith, and courage, and zeal; at once, their lips were touched as with a live coal, and their tongues became eloquent in advocacy and defence of their Master's cause; at once, they were ready for the responsibilities cast upon them, and for any conflict with opposing forces.

How came this change? Not in a merely ordinary manner; not merely through a process of training. They had now received special Divine aid. This Jesus had promised them:—"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv: 26.) "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." They were now "endued with power from on high." (Acts i: 5.) So endued, they realized the promise made to them on their first appointment:—"And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak. For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. x: 18-20.)

The main points of their testimony were the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. These events they coupled together, and affirmed and re-affirmed in terms as strong as human language can frame. This they did in the presence of the vast assemblages they addressed. They not only affirmed them as facts within the personal knowledge of those they addressed; but in the same connection they charged some of their hearers, among whom were their rulers, with the crime of putting to death their rightful sovereign.

The following are specimens of such utterances:—"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and

signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."

Note how the testimony of the Apostles was enforced by the miracles performed in connection. We are told that there were wrought many signs and wonders and acts of healing. Two of these miracles stand out prominently—the gift of tongues, and the healing of a certain lame man.

On the day of Pentecost the disciples "were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. . . . And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The speakers appear to have been all Galileans, using one language. The hearers were of diverse and many languages, or dialects; and yet, every one heard in his own tongue wherein he was born.

The man healed of lameness is said to have been lame from his mother's womb, and to have been above forty years old at the time. Lying at the gate of the temple, whither he was daily carried, and asking alms of Peter and John, as they entered, Peter said to him—"Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God."

Now these things transpired as related, or they did not. If they did, they confirm the testimony of the Apostles to the fact of the still greater miracle of the resurrection. If they did not, the record is a bold falsehood. Those who witnessed them could not have been deceived.

There seems to be no room for the suggestion of trickery, sleight-of-hand, sorcery, or anything of the kind. They happened in open day, were witnessed by multitudes, and were of such nature that the plainest common-sense could not mistake their character and significance. Of the lame man it is said, that "all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple." But this is not all.

The rulers are represented as confessing in a remarkable manner that this man had been miraculously healed. Being grieved at the teaching of the Apostles, they had them arrested and brought before them. "And when they had set them in their midst, they asked: By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" Peter answered: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. . . . And beholding the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."

The astute-rulers and elders, who had put Jesus to death, who had done their best to guard against his resurrection, and who, when his body disappeared from the tomb, bribed the soldiers to falsely report that it was stolen while they slept, are now, by their own confession, at their wit's end.

The record further reads:—"But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it."

So it seems that those through whose agency this "notable miracle" was wrought, declared that it was wrought in the name of the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth, and at the same time accused the rulers whom they addressed, of such crucifixion. And so it seems that these rulers, at the time and on the spot, acknowledged that the miracle was manifest to all them that dwelt at Jerusalem, and that they could not deny it.

So stands the record that has come down to us through more than eighteen centuries. Did those who are said to have thus confessed they could make no denial at the time, deny the record after it was made? Or did their immediate successors do it? Have we any record of such denial? I know of none, and feel sure you can produce none.

Now, to sum up on this point: Such being the situation in regard to the leading facts and events recorded in the New Testament; such their striking and marvellous character; such the notoriety of their occurrence; such the testimony of eye-witnesses, uttered on the spot without denial, and in the face of the bitterest opposition—followed by wide-spread proclamation by the same witnesses and their co-laborers and followers throughout all the surrounding cities and countries, with continued and unrelenting opposition, and no record of any denial of their essential truth, or of any impeachment of the record that has come down to us;—such, I say, being the situation, how, to an unbiased mind, must seem your demand for “contemporaneous” proof? Bear in mind that this record, made by those who *saw* and *heard* and *knew* what they record is *proof*—proof that has stood the test of centuries.

As ever, your friend.

AUGUST 18, 1877.

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LETTER X.

Christianity and Humanity—The Skeptical View of Christianity—No Care for Property or the Future—Jesus a Deceptive Teacher—Anger and Fear—Just Punishments not Tyrannical—God is Love and a Father—Children Suffer for the Sins of their Parents—Love and Fear—The Faults of Christians—The Effects of Prayer—The Denial of God by Law.

FRIEND G.—Having made up your mind that Christianity is an imposition, you very naturally attempt to deprive it of all merit. Accordingly, you represent it as devoid of humanity, or as entirely another thing. You say, "And now a word about your much boasted Christianity. You mean humanity, and you should say so."

You further say, substantially, that Christ's chief doctrine was that the rich would be forever lost, and the poor rich and happy in the next world; that he taught that men should sell all they had and give to the poor, and take no thought for the morrow; that Jesus, like Minoz, Lycurgus, Pythagoras, and other law-givers, adopted the policy that, in order to secure obedience, it was necessary to deceive the vulgar, and even professed so to teach "that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand"; that we are taught in the Bible to live like cowards in the fear of God, who is angry and jealous, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and threatening his enemies with vengeance and hell; that such teaching is a cause of gloominess and insanity, repulsive and unworthy of respect, and a hellish superstition, etc.

You also claim that the Christian church is infidel, using the name of Christ, and pretending to believe the Bible, but in practice denying such profession; that the Christian prays on one line and does business on another; that his crops and herds yield no more; that his wares are not superior; that he does not sell at less profit; that his per cent. and insurance have no prayer-margin; that on a sinking vessel his prayers will not save him from going down; that the devouring grasshoppers will leave no sooner on account of such prayers, even though offered in response to a Governor's proclamation; that the Infidel can control the natural and supernatural just as much by whistling as the Christian can by praying—offering to risk one of the former against ten of the latter; that Christians of the same faith, fighting against each other in opposing armies, pray for help to the same God, yet no help comes from such source to either; and that, if Congress should pass a law denying the existence and prohibiting the worship of God, he would take it very quietly.

Such is your view of Christianity as you see it in the Bible record, and in the lives of its professed adherents. Is it a true or a false one? Essentially false, I am sure; and for two leading reasons. It is based, first, on the misconception or misinterpretation of certain Scripture representations; and second, on the imperfections, short-comings, inconsistencies, and misdeeds of its professors, while it entirely overlooks its declared objects, and its essential elements. I hope to make the difference appear. A few words first as to how much or how little truth there is in your representations.

1. Touching care for the future, and for property and its disposition, and the conditions of the rich and poor. Taking the passages you refer to, with some others like them, out of their respective connections, and giving them a strict and literal construction, there is some plausibility in your representations. There is no question, however, among biblical students, that such passages generally have a special application, or are to be otherwise understood in a qualified sense.

It should be granted that the Apostles understood their import as well as any who have come after them, and especially as well as either of us. They certainly did not understand Christ as enjoining his disciples against industrious habits, and a wise forecast in providing for their own wants and the needs of those dependent on them. They taught by precept and example that men should labor, working with their hands; that he who would not work, should not eat; and declared that he who did not provide for his own, had denied the faith, and was worse than an Infidel. (Rom. xii: 11; I. Cor. iv: 12; Acts xviii: 3; xx: 35; I. Thess. ii: 9; II. Thess. iii: 7-12; I. Tim. v: 8.)

The lesson which Jesus teaches I take to be this:—We should aim ever to do right, trusting that our wants will be supplied, and holding all that we are, and all that we have, as stewards of Him on whose bounty we are momentarily dependent. To hold wealth against such obligations is wrong. To be true in this regard, is to be a denizen of the heavenly kingdom; to be untrue, is to debar ourselves from it. Now, if there is a God on whom we are so dependent, and who cares for us as a kind Father, can any fault be found with such teaching?

2. In support of your position that Jesus adopted the policy of deceiving the vulgar in order to secure their obedience, you quote certain language of his, as I have noted above. Does he mean in the use of this language to confess himself a deliberate deceiver? This he does, or you are wrong. To candid criticism, looking at all the facts, is not a different construction admissible?

You very well know that men do not readily accept teaching which runs counter to their prejudices and pride, and especially to their evil dispositions and habits. The truth may be set before them in the plainest terms, yet they fail to recognize it, and sometimes become enraged in view of it. They shut their eyes against unwelcome light, especially if it strips them of their disguises and reveals their hypocrisy and wickedness. Such were some of the hearers of Jesus,

and such was the reception they gave his teaching. Seeing, they did not perceive; hearing, they did not understand.

Paul, in quoting this language, gives the reason why such hearers do not perceive and understand,—“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” (Acts xxviii:27.)

God is represented as hardening the hearts of some, as in the case of Pharaoh. This is true in a sense. It is a law of God—of Nature, if you please—that those who persist in error and wrong, become confirmed and hardened in them. Under such law, through their own agency, many of the Jews closed their eyes and steeled their hearts against the teachings of Christ, and hence rejected him.

Perhaps you have at hand a partial exemplification of the rule expressed in the quotation you make. You preach your gospel of Infidelity—especially to me. You say, expressly, or substantially, You can't prove that a man is inspired, because you can't witness the operations of his mind to know how his thoughts come; nor can revelation be proved. There is no personal God—no God but Nature. A miracle is contrary to Nature, and impossible. If miracles were once possible, they are possible now. Let us have a fresh miracle. The miracles of the New Testament are lies. Your God is a myth. Show me your God. You have no God. There is no power higher than human agency and the laws of Nature. There is no word of God or of Christ; they never wrote anything. There never was a first man—properly so-called. Where was God before he made the world, about six thousand years ago? Where did he get the raw material of which to make it? If the Bible is his word, how is it that he did not know the shape and movements of the earth, and its relation to the sun? There is no better land than that in Iowa and Illinois; and if a man should die here simply to get to a better land, he would find out, when too late, that he had fooled away his time as well as his life.

So runs your discourse. Notwithstanding the light you shed around me I am incredulous. "Seeing, I perceive not; hearing, I understand not"—so as to be "converted." If perverse, I am to blame; if not, the fault, peradventure, is in the teaching.

3. As to the "anger," "vengeance," "fear," etc., of which you speak, I call your attention to the fact that every reference to these in the Bible is made in view of the accountability of man, and the punishment he deserves for his evil deed. I think you can point to no instance to the contrary in either the Old or the New Testaments.

I agree in part with what you say of the influence of fear; but think you go too far. You seem to imply that fear has no legitimate place in the government of human beings, and that it is wrong or unwise to inspire it. How is it under human laws and the laws of Nature? There would be little room for fear if men never did wrong. Penal laws exist to restrain wrong-doing. The well-disposed need no such restraint.

I trust we may both say, without boasting, that we have no fear of the gallows, or of the penitentiary, or that we shall die of the delirium tremens; and yet we know that thousands have reason to fear such fate, and to take warning in time. All men go astray in some degree, and have reason, in like measure, to fear evil consequences. And what is true in this respect of individuals, is true on general principles of families, communities, and nations. The Bible deals with men on this principle in all their relations. Hence its warnings, threatenings, and denunciations.

It does not follow, because much suffering results, that the governing power is tyrannical or cruel. Just and wise penal inflictions are not unmerciful. So we judge of human laws, and so of the natural. Are the laws of God, as revealed in the Bible, an exception? You may say, yes; I say, no. We must severally judge for ourselves.

It is a question, to some extent, of interpretation. The Scriptures expressly declare that God is love; that he is merciful and just; that he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve

the children of men; that he is the Father even of sinners; and that he is kind to the evil and unthankful. Such is his character. Unless he is a contradiction in himself, he can neither threaten nor inflict a punishment inconsistent with such character. It does not follow that because he is good, he will inflict no punishment for wrong-doing. Good parents and good governments both punish disobedience. They would not be good if they did not.

Of the measure and duration of just punishments, finite mortals are liable to misjudge. Infinite wisdom cannot. Of this we may be sure, that punishment may rightfully continue while disobedience is persisted in. Reformation does away with its necessity and brings relief. It will never be otherwise.

I am aware that the language of Scripture on this subject is strong and implies great suffering. Without going into the realm of the invisible, we both know that the consequences of man's wickedness, as revealed before our eyes, and in history, are often appalling. Only such language could fitly describe them. I suppose such results would follow if no threatenings were announced. These threatenings are intended as warnings to deter men from wrong-doing, and have such effect to a greater or less extent. It is therefore to the credit of the Bible, rather than otherwise, that it holds them forth.

And no discount is to be allowed on account of the announcement of which you complain, that God will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. So far as I am aware, it is the unanimous testimony of physiologists, and others who have given special attention to the subjects, that the evil consequences of drunkenness and debauchery in parents extend to their children—often to the third and fourth generations. This, I suppose, you do not doubt; and this is the sense, I apprehend, in which the language in question is to be understood. It seems vain to complain of the announcement, while the law stands revealed and confirmed.

I am aware that not a few Christians, more especially in the past, have entertained very erroneous and unworthy views of

Deity; and I agree with you that these have been the cause of much gloominess, and of insanity, even. This I hold to be not the fault of Christianity itself, but of a misconception of it, and a failure to see and accept it in its purity.

You will say, "Love and fear exist not together; whom we truly love, we cannot fear; whom we fear, we cannot truly love." I am glad you so far accept the teaching of the Bible. John, the beloved disciple, says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (I. John iv:18.) You will see that you have no right to announce such a sentiment as a new discovery, or as peculiar to Infidelity. Fear has its mission while wrong exists; but when love becomes supreme its mission is ended.

4. The improprieties you urge against professing Christians are just in part. Against some, they weigh with full force; against some others, only partially; against yet others, perhaps not at all. Against Christianity itself, they have no weight.

5. As to the virtue and effects of prayer, you probably know less than you imagine. You know, of course, that it does not accomplish certain things which do not take place. You do not know that it has no effect in bringing about other things that do take place.

Prayer may not kill grass-hoppers, nor drive them off outright. You may be sure, in a given case, that it does not. You cannot know that it has no influence in mitigating the evils they bring, nor that it can have no effect in ultimately ending the great plague, or shrinking it into insignificance. It is believed that certain precautionary measures on a large scale will have such result. A convention of the governors of Western States has been held, and the aid of Congress invoked to put the necessary measures into operation. May not the prayers offered have had some influence in starting such movement? I insist you cannot know to the contrary.

Intelligent prayer does not ignore other needful means. Prayer and work belong together. They are mutual aids.

Both might save a vessel that would otherwise sink. And then, there may be mental and moral forces, and methods of operation, of which your philosophy has taken no account. Whatever may be true as to the influence of prayer on Deity, there can be no question that it has a moral influence on community,—an influence for good, and in the degree in which it expresses desires for good. As to the difference in moral effect between the praying of Christians and the whistling of Infidels, I leave you to judge, on your “second sober thought.”

6. What would come about if our Congress should enact a law denying the existence and prohibiting the worship of God, I know not. There would probably be neither earthquake nor deluge as the result. Of this, however, I am morally certain—that such a decree can never be passed, unless there shall come “a falling away first,”—a state, indeed, of utter demoralization.

If our nation, through a long period of extravagance, corruption, and oppression, shall treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, as did France—breeding and placing in power such a set of men as Danton, Marat, and Robespierre—such a decree will be possible, and with it such scenes as accompanied the French Revolution. They would be fitting complements of each other, and a legitimate outburst of the vast volume of pent-up wickedness.

As ever, yours,

SEPT. 15, 1877.

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LETTER XI.

Christianity and Humanity, as Related—Quotation from Mr. Putnam—His Eulogy of Virtue at the Expense of Christianity—How Came he by such high Estimate of Virtue?—His Mistake.

FRIEND G.—In my last communication I considered your view and estimate of Christianity. I now purpose to consider what Christianity really is, in connection with your suggestion that it is something apart, or different, from Humanity, and also in connection with what you quote on this subject from Mr. Putnam.

What, then, is Christianity? What is Humanity? And what relation, if any, have they to each other?

Christianity is not a mere set of doctrines and precepts, and rites and ordinances, to be accepted and observed, however they may be associated with it. In its essence, it is a reformatory and elevating moral force, personified in Jesus of Nazareth, and exemplified in his life and character, as well as expressed in his teaching. According to the record, it is a spiritual and regenerating power, shed down from on high upon the world of mankind through the mission of him who came to show us the Father, and to be to us the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Christianity is to be judged, then, as to what it is and as to its effects by what it appears to be in the life and teaching of its Founder and of his disciples, in so far as they follow him, and by nothing else. It is not, therefore, respon-

sible for anything in the life and tenets of its adherents that does not accord with the pattern set by their great Exemplar.

Humanity is defined to be "kindness, benevolence, tenderness." This, I suppose, accords with your view, as it does with mine. It is doubtless safe to say that humanity, in this sense, is possible in a certain degree, wherever man exists,—possible in connection with all kinds of religion, and even apart from all religion, if men are anywhere found in such condition. It has its root in human nature, and is one of its good elements, or one phase of its manifestations.

The important point to be here considered is the relation existing between Christianity and this humanity. And here I remark that although humanity may exist, in some degree, apart from Christianity, there can be no such thing as Christianity without the element of humanity. Both have the same origin. Both spring from the same fountain of beneficence. Christianity is an added force, and comes in aid of our common humanity,—comes to quicken and broaden it, and lift it to a higher plane. This I take to be the import of the record we have, and this the influence of Christianity as evinced by its achievements during the centuries of its existence. To such record and history I appeal with confidence.

I ask you now to consider with me, for a moment, some portions of this record which you seem to overlook,—taking it for granted, for the time being, that the record speaks the truth. What, then, is the revelation this record makes of the Man of Nazareth and his mission? What does it reveal of his life, character, and teaching? A few familiar sentences give us the key to the whole.

1. Consider the origin and aim of this religion—whence it came, and with what motive and to what end it was introduced:

"The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

"I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me."

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because

that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him."

God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

2. Consider the character of its Founder:

"Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich."

"He was meek and lowly in heart."

"He went about doing good."

"The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them" and the hungered multitudes are fed by thousands.

"He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

"When he was reviled, he reviled not again."

"When he suffered he threatened not."

Put to death by his enemies, he died with a prayer for them on his lips.

"Wherefore, God hath highly exalted him and given him a Name above every name."

3. As an agency in the reformation and purification of humanity, consider how wide is the scope and how radical is the purpose of Christianity,—aiming as it does at nothing short of the repression of all wrong, and the substitution in its room of the highest good,—which end it seeks to accomplish by purifying the fountain of the human heart, and bringing all its subjects into moral accord with their chosen Leader:

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

"He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity."

"I will put my laws into their hearts."

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

4. Witness how admirably the precepts and admonitions of Jesus and his apostles harmonize with the declared object of his mission :

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself."

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

"Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"Be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another."

"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant,—even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

"He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

"If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light."

"If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee."

Swear not. Lie not. Steal not. Covet not. Commit no adultery. Avoid the lustful look. Avoid hypocrisy. Avoid murderous haste. Avoid haughty pride. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

From what is presented, you will observe that Christianity does not seek to promote mere humanity—mere "benevolence, kindness, tenderness"—but also all those sterner qualities and more difficult attainments which, with these, constitute the highest virtue of which human nature is cap-

able,—such as the choice of righteousness above all earthly treasures, singleness of purpose in the pursuit of good, purity of heart, chastity of life, modesty of demeanor, self-denial, self-sacrifice for the good of others, and fidelity to truth and duty against all temptations and in the face of all dangers.

On the other hand, as influences to the same end, it not only denounces gross wickedness in all its forms, but condemns all shades of selfishness, all arrogance, all untruth, artifice and double-dealing, and all impurity in life, word and thought.

Not only from what I have quoted, but from the whole New Testament record, this one fact stands out in bold relief—Jesus of Nazareth is the personification of perfected human nature. He is the Teacher, Leader, and Redeemer of men. As such, they are called upon to receive him, trust him, and follow him,—assured that the more fully they imbibe his spirit and become like him, the more nearly they attain to the perfection to which they are called and destined.

Consider with what fidelity Jesus adhered to the rules he laid down for human conduct,—how by his own example he enforced the precepts he enjoined upon others. Consider how he put behind him all suggestions of worldly ambition. Consider with what sublime forbearance, with what patient courage, and with what fulness of love, he met all the opposition, endured all the taunts, bore all the ignominy, and suffered all the cruelty—even to crucifixion—which his enemies could bring upon him. Consider all this, and then imagine that you hear from the cross to which his enemies had nailed him, that prayer which human lips had never uttered—“*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”

I have thus endeavored to set forth what Christianity is as revealed in the record. What it is, judged by its influence on the world as shown in the history of the past and in the condition of the world at present, will more or less appear in what I have further to say, and especially in considering what you quote from Mr. Putnam.

In concluding your communication of July 8, 1875, you say:

"The Rev. S. P. Putnam, late Unitarian minister at Omaha, delivered a lecture at the Paine Memorial Building in Boston to a large audience, on Sunday, June 20, 1875, and in conclusion I will quote from his lecture, which is here just to the point."

You then give a long quotation from which I make the following extracts:

"Admitting that there is no hereafter, is this life then a failure? Must we creep into our graves like so many beasts? There is a vast stimulation, indeed, in the thought of immortality; it has haunted the race like a sweet and wondrous dream; and in the experience of many the evidence accumulates that we do rise superior to the dust, that we are clothed with new and finer garments, that we have mightier faculties and a vaster outlook into the universe of things, and so the eternal world is not a blank, but is full of noble and endless pictures, and in the darkness of the tomb we hear the whisper of the immortals, and see the splendor of their robes. Still we cannot insist upon this belief. . . . This life is none the less infinitely beautiful if there is no life to come. . . ."

"Well, then, if neither the Bible, nor Jesus, nor God, nor immortality is the supreme thing, what is? To this I answer, Virtue—simple human virtue. This is the only thing that exists in and for itself. Virtue is the main thing; and if Bibles and churches, and Christs and dogmas do not produce virtue, they are valueless. . . . But it is affirmed that they do. . . . To this I answer, that virtue depends upon nothing outside of itself for its manifestations. . . . It exists in its own radiance; it is preëminent in its own glory, and no Bible nor Jesus can make it one whit more majestic. . . . In its own self, virtue is infinitely commanding; it can win its way in the heart and soul of humanity, without any exterior aid, even that of Deity. . . ."

"This is the flag that I would fling to the breeze—not the Bible, or Jesus, or God, or Immortality—but Virtue, Duty, Right. These are the ringing words that I would have passed from lip to lip. In these we conquer."

Strange utterances, indeed, are some of these. I can account for them, coming from one of the intelligence of Mr. Putnam, only on the supposition that, for the time-being, he was lost in a vale of mist. He exalts virtue at the expense of Christianity, and everything peculiar to it.

He does not speak too highly of virtue; but in attempting its eulogy, he disparages Christianity without reason and against all experience and observation. Not only so. He dissevers virtue from its subject, without which it can have no existence,—claiming that "it is dependent on nothing outside of itself," and is "infinitely commanding," "without any exterior aid,"—as though it were a kind of self-existent entity holding sway in the moral world—an assumption false in philosophy and false in fact.

I have already, in a few words, spoken of the relation Christianity and virtue bear to each other. This relation, as I view it, will further appear in the observations to which I now invite your attention touching what you quote from Mr. Putnam.

Virtue is not a thing existing in and for itself. It has no abstract being. It is simply a condition; it is moral goodness. Human virtue is a condition of human disposition and conduct accordant with right and duty. It is an attainment,—a growth of the moral nature of man, through voluntary endeavor, in those excellencies which go to make up the highest type of manhood, and fit one to fulfil the end of his being.

The highest type of virtue is to be found in the harmonious combination of those excellencies of human character which accord with the highest conceptions of right and duty, and which tend to promote the highest human good.

While man is by nature capable of virtue, he becomes virtuous only through the right exercise of his moral agency,

and in the degree in which he brings his energies to bear in the repression of wrong and the promotion of right. As man's natural endowments render him capable of virtue, we may expect to find human virtue, in some degree, wherever man is found,—in connection with all religions, and with no religion, if he anywhere so exists.

How does this virtue come into being? Does it spring up spontaneously in the individual and in the race? Or is it, in origin and growth, the product of extraneous causes?

In answer to these questions, it is sufficient here to observe, that the human heart is the battle ground of contending forces—of good and evil, of right and wrong, of virtue and vice; and that extraneous causes, operating on his native susceptibilities, have a powerful influence in determining the moral conduct and character of man.

I do not mean by this that a man who performs a right act through any influence outside of the character of the act, or simply to obtain an extraneous reward, or who refrains from a wrong act through such influence, or simply to avoid an extraneous penalty, is therefore virtuous. He only is virtuous who bows at the shrine of virtue for virtue's sake.

The extraneous influences which promote virtue are to be found in the conditions of human life,—particularly in those examples of human conduct which reveal virtue in its true light, and exhibit its excellencies in the various walks and ways of life. Virtue is "commanding" when a noble life becomes the model after which other lives are patterned. It is thus that the manifestation of virtue promotes virtue; and the more perfect the model, the more powerful the influence to that end. The least virtuous are aided by those just above them, and these again by those still higher, and so on in the ascending scale. Virtue becomes "infinitely commanding" only when revealed in a perfect model.

The truth is, that human virtue has no existence, even, excepting *in the lives* of virtuous men and women. *In such lives*, then, must we look for all its commanding and captivating graces;—and is it not asking too much of us, when we are

called upon in rapturous strains and "ringing words" to behold the beauties of virtue, and pay our devotions at its shrine, to turn our backs on the "Man of Nazareth"?

It is creditable to Mr. Putnam's goodness of heart, that while he discards Christianity, he cleaves to virtue. It seems pertinent, however, to ask—How came he by his high estimate of virtue? Where has he been? Where did he get his education, and under what influences? Was he raised in a heathen land, or in some land and under influences neither heathen nor Christian?

It seems he has been a minister of the Gospel. This leaves no doubt as to what have been his surroundings in the respect named. May he not, therefore, well consider whether he is not indebted for the exalted estimate which he places on virtue to that very Christianity from which he would sever it, and which he now casts behind him as mischievous or worthless?

Let him look around him. Let him survey the path-way in life along which he has journeyed thus far. Let him call to mind as many examples as he can of men and women, in the higher and humbler walks of life, who have exhibited the highest excellencies of character which he has known. Let him consider whether most, if not all of these, have not been adherents of Christianity and disciples of its Founder.

Such persons could not be hypocritical or unfaithful. They have patterned their lives after their chosen Leader, looking to him as a perfect model of all the virtues—as "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Such, to some extent, have been his associates and acquaintances. Can he say they have not aided him in his conceptions of virtue, and even in his endeavors after its attainment?

Further. To those of this class within his personal acquaintance, he may add a great cloud of witnesses, of like character, reared under the influence of Christianity, living in the present, or adorning the pages of its history during the centuries of its existence.

Now, can Mr. Putnam go into any Pagan or Mohammedan

land, or into any realm were men and women have been born and raised free from the influence of any religion; or can he go to the pages of any history, outside of Christendom, and gather a company whose virtues equal—not to say transcend—the virtues of those reared within its pale and moulded by its influence? If not, has he not made a mistake—a sad mistake—in turning his back on Christianity?

On this topic, more, anon. I remain,

Yours truly,

Nov. 24, 1877.

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LETTER XII.

Can Humanity Rise, Unaided?—The Question Problematical—Christianity Shows a Better Past, and Promises a Brighter Future—What Mr. Putnam has Left, and what he has Found—A Sad Spectacle—His Return—No Better Land—The Influence of Christianity on Pagan Nations.

FRIEND G.:—Mr. Putnam has strong faith in Humanity—Godless though it may be. He says:—"I believe in Humanity, that goodness and beauty are in it, and that it will strive after truth and attain it, and that virtues more glorious than the stars will adorn its brow."

Does not this seem too roseate a view of human nature from any other standpoint than Christianity? May it not with almost equal truth be affirmed that it has opposite qualities of equal, if not of paramount force? Considering the race as a whole, in view of the present and the past, does it not seem problematical whether, without superhuman or subhuman aid, either the good or the evil in man would ever gain complete ascendancy?

In individuals and in nations they have been in perpetual conflict—each predominant in turn. Some individuals have been comparatively illustrious in virtue, and others notorious in vice. Nations have now and then risen to considerable eminence in intellectual attainments, in material prosperity, and in the arts, and have afterward, through all-pervading corruption, perished from the earth. Such seems to have been the process from first to last.

Possibly, there has been some progress. Possibly, the

race, outside of the influence of Christianity and the Bible, occupies a somewhat higher moral plane to-day than ever before. We know not. Be this as it may, the future from such standpoint is not radiant. If, as some suppose, man has existed upon the earth for hundreds of thousands of years, judging from the past and the present, ages untold must yet transpire, at the best, before he can attain unaided that supreme height of virtue in which Mr. Putnam beholds him crowned. In judging of man's possibilities in this regard, there are two leading considerations to be taken into account, and which in a measure counterbalance each other.

On the one hand, it seems true that all the elements and powers of human nature are essentially good; that evil of the character in question comes only from their abuse; and that what is needed to insure progress, and ultimately the highest virtue, is such restraint and direction of all man's faculties as will permit only their normal use,—which may be achieved, it is supposed, through experience, observation, and careful culture.

On the other hand is the grim fact of the brevity of human life on the earth. In the case of each individual, death soon cuts short all opportunities for improvement. While generations succeed and blend into each other, every life begins at the same point. If individuals could live on indefinitely, or if the experience and attainments of each generation could be transferred to that which succeeds, the progress might be great, and the probable outcome more assuring; but such is not the situation. Whatever agencies may come in as aids, there can be no improvement excepting through individual experience.

Although experience cannot be transferred, its results may be gathered and taught, and handed down from generation to generation. This is done, and is undoubtedly to some extent an aid to progress; but observation attests that such teaching is largely ineffective in the presence of strong temptation. Prejudice and passion are blind and very obstinate.

Without experience it is hard to believe that anything captivating to the eye, or pleasant to the taste, is poisonous.

Another consideration which may be thought to bear on the subject, deserves mention. There may be some truth in the doctrine of "the survival of the fittest."

If this be so, and if the principle operates in the case of man, so affecting his whole nature as to diminish his tendencies to evil and augment his power to rise in virtue, progress may result. I say *may* result, for history shows that it cannot be sufficient in itself to keep the race uninterruptedly on the ascent. If it were, there could be no declensions, such as we know have taken place. The principle, if such it is, has the same effect whether the race, for the time, is on the rising or the falling grade. In the one case, it accelerates the rise; in the other, it retards the fall.

While I regard the question as problematical, as I have intimated, I am inclined to the opinion that human nature is susceptible of some improvement in moral excellence, even without such aid as Christianity affords, so that in the lapse of ages, the race may possibly rise in the mass to the level heretofore thus achieved by the most virtuous. If this should require hundreds of thousands of years, as it probably would, the outlook would still not be entrancing. On the other hand, there is a possibility, and, seemingly, an almost equal probability of general degeneracy.

Christianity having wrought a better past and present, also reveals a brighter future. It regards this world as the birth-place and cradle, and this life as the infancy of the race, and looks upon death as the portal to a realm of infinite possibilities and endless progress. It comes to man in his imperfection and weakness, in his error and darkness, in his guilt and degradation, bringing divine aid. It unseals his eye-lids and pours into his intellect the light of truth—truth he could know only through special revelation. It quickens his moral sense by pointing to his obligations to his Creator and his fellowmen. By the most striking manifestations of the divine goodness, it opens his heart to the stream of love flowing from

the fountain of infinite Beneficence. By all the motives and influences, indeed, which can operate on a reasonable being, to wean him from the ways of wrong and evil, and stimulate him to the highest attainments in virtue, it continually beckons him onward and upward. Through such divine aid he rises here, and will continue to rise through the ages of the future. Based on the solid facts and achievements of the past, such is the promise of Christianity, and such the prospect it holds out.

Mr. Putnam seems strongly to imply that Christianity is of no avail in promoting human virtue and improvement. If what I have already said is well founded, such a position is wide of the truth. I have spoken of the influence of Christianity in this respect as illustrated in the lives of its individual professors, and especially in the life of their Leader. In the nature of the case, this influence operates like leaven in meal. Its tendency is to assimilate the mass with which it comes in contact.

I wish to say a few words here touching the effects of this influence on the masses of Christendom. If these have been such on individual character as I have assumed, and of which I have supposed Mr. Putnam to be cognizant, they should be apparant in the moral elevation and improved condition of the masses of the people who have come under the sway of such influence. What seem to be the facts?

I suppose any candid or intelligent person will admit that the condition of the masses of the people within the pale of Christendom is much above that of the masses outside; that they are superior in intelligence and virtue, and enjoy more comfortable means of subsistence. I suppose it is almost equally plain that this difference is due chiefly to Christianity.

And here I would call your special attention to the institutions for the enlightenment of the masses, and for the improvement and comfort of the unfortunate classes, that have sprung up in Christian lands, and that do not exist to any extent elsewhere; and to the fact that these have been set on foot and maintained largely, if not chiefly, through the volun-

tary labor and sacrifice of those who credit Christianity as true, and in entire accord with its spirit.

In a former communication I spoke of the institutions for general learning,—universities, colleges, etc.,— which exist throughout Christendom, and whose origin and support are chiefly due to Christian influence. I now refer, in addition, to institutions for the blind, for the deaf and dumb, for the insane and idiotic, for orphans, for the aged and infirm, for inebriates, for the discipline of the wayward, for the poor in general, etc. And in the view I now present, I may add all of the institutions specially devoted to the propagation of Christianity, such as churches, theological schools, missionary organizations, etc. With such institutions as these the lands of Christendom are dotted over.

Consider what vast labor and treasure have been devoted to the establishment of these institutions,—how much is invested in edifices, in hospitals, asylums, universities, colleges, cathedrals, churches, school and infirmary buildings, etc. Consider what labor and what vast sums are annually contributed to keep up these institutions and make them effective—bearing in mind that no inconsiderable portion is devoted to missionary operations in foreign lands.

The point I make is this—that these institutions have been originated and perpetually sustained through voluntary contributions. If these have sometimes taken the form of a tax, it has been with the general consent of those paying the tax.

I suppose it will be admitted that self-sacrifice for the good of others—individual and public—is one of the highest virtues of which human nature is capable; and that the extent of such sacrifice is a fair measure of the virtue of those who make it. Such, pre-eminently, is the virtue which Christianity enjoins and inspires, through the precepts and examples of its Founder and his apostles.

The spirit of Christianity is essentially *missionary*. He who has it does not inquire, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He does not wrap about him the cloak of selfishness and say, "I will take care of myself; let others do the same." On

the contrary, he looks upon himself as one of a vast brotherhood, bound together by common ties and having a common destiny. He feels that he is himself dependent, not only on his fellows, but on the Author of his being, to whom he is indebted, not only for all the blessings of his mortal life, but for the inspiring hope of a more blissful existence for himself and those he loves in a life to come. Part of this is to him a present reality. The rest he firmly believes. Whether pure fact, or fact and delusion, accepting it all as true, it becomes to him an inspiration, under whose influence he works and gives, and organizes and builds, and pours out his treasures, that others may be partakers of like benefits and like joy. Thus, through united and persistent effort, monuments of civilization have been reared all over Christendom, whose cap-stones and pinnacles are radiant with the light of a brighter future.

I am well aware that in estimating the virtue of a community by such a standard, some account must be taken of motives of a lower character,—that the results accomplished are to be attributed, in some measure, to superstitious fear, to pride, rivalry, and ambition, and in some measure, in the case of edifices, to æsthetic taste. But after making all allowances that can be claimed on such grounds, there remains a vast aggregate of results that can be attributed only to disinterested benevolence. And if this benevolence is its offspring, we can come to no other conclusion than that Christianity is a potent—may I not say the most potent?—factor in the civilization and elevation of Humanity.

It seems superfluous to ask whether Mr. Putnam, or any of his new associates, can point to anything outside of Christendom, in the present or the past, comparable with these achievements of Christianity. If they cannot, and I think the pretense that they can will not be set up—may they not well consider whether, in their efforts to undermine the faith of men in Christianity, they are not carrying on a warfare against the best interests of society? If they say their only aim is to build up Humanity in every thing good—in “Virtue,

Duty, Right"—what evidence can they produce that this can be accomplished better, if at all, by any other force than Christianity? If Paganism, nor Mohammedanism, can do it, is Infidelity equal to the task?

In leaving Christianity and its associations, Mr. Putnam provokes, if he does not challenge, a comparison which it would seem he can ill afford to confront. Taking into view the past and the present, it is safe to say he has left a sacramental host of as noble moral heroes as the world has ever known,—many thousands of whom have welcomed martyrdom rather than swerve from their allegiance, while many more have worn out their lives in patient and humble efforts to enlighten their fellowmen in the ways of righteousness and peace,—not a few of whom have left their homes and native lands, with all the advantages of civilized and refined society, and gone into lands sunk in idolatry, superstition, and barbarism—laboring there under all possible disadvantages to carry on the same heavenly work. Vast multitudes more have poured out their treasure like water, building institutions and organizing forces to accomplish the same end.

Such is the company and such the cause Mr. Putnam has left. What has he gained? I would not intimate that he has gone into bad company. I trust he has not. To justify the change, he should have found better company, or a better cause, or both. Has he? On this point I may be somewhat in the dark. I think not much, however, taking into account the whole body of skeptics, and their works, from first to last.

Infidelity is no new thing. It has existed, in one form or another, co-eval with Christianity. If it has been a positive force for good in the world, what are its works, and where are they? Where are the institutions it has built up, and what is their character? What organizations have been set on foot, and what gratuitous contributions have been made to further its supposed beneficent ends? How large is the army of its moral heroes, who have spent their fortunes and their lives in its service? What one, even, among them has suffered martyrdom for the faith that was in him—or not in him?

I am aware that there have been, and are, a few men, conspicuous in the fields of literature and science, who have expressed more or less doubt of the truth of Christianity, or of portions of the Bible record; but this they have done, for the most part, incidentally, and with little reference to the facts of history on which they are based. I am aware of none who have devoted their lives or their fortunes, either at home or in foreign lands, in dispensation of the special benefits of infidelity. And as to institutions and edifices dedicated to its furtherance, either in the past or the present, I know of nothing more conspicuous than the Paine Memorial Building, in which Mr. Putnam delivered his address, and the fraternity which centers there.

Such is Mr. Putnam's choice, and such the difference. With such a record of Christianity and of infidelity before him, to me it is a sad spectacle to see a man of talents and high culture, who has been raised in the lap of the former, forsake it for the latter. Has he not left fruitful fields for a desert? Has he not bartered his birthright for less than a mess of pottage? He may possibly live to regain the conviction that in laboring to promote human virtue and raise mankind to the highest plane of moral excellence, it is no part of wisdom to ignore God and Jesus, and the Bible and immortality. I hope so.

What I have so far written in regard to Mr. Putnam, and what you quote from him, was prepared substantially as I send it to you, some months ago. Since then, I have been informed by a friend and former associate of Mr. Putnam, that he has retraced his steps and re-entered the Christian ministry. In this I rejoice. It seems "just to the point."

You give me to understand that you have no "hankering for a better land after death." You think "the most humane and happy thought upon the subject of the future, is that of peaceful, unconscious, eternal sleep. To crave more is mere selfishness; a craving for a fortune in heaven is no better than to crave wealth and a fortune here." You further suggest

that "a God and a spiritual world," which we can neither realize nor identify, cannot benefit us.

I can hardly think you are quite at much of a stoic as your language would imply. You would seem to have no desire for anything—at least, for any improvement of your present condition. It would be "mere selfishness."

You would do well to bear in mind your previous intimation that you prefer this country to a heathen land; and that you would live, if you could, among a people whose time is taken up in making themselves as happy as possible. You would not, I take it, count this "mere selfishness," but rather a laudable ambition. Bear in mind, also, your indorsement of Mr. Putnam's remark:—"There is a *vast stimulation*, indeed, in the thought of immortality." This is true; and Mr. Putnam well adds, "it has haunted the race like a wondrous dream." Why, then, advance the idea that you have no ambition or desire for any better land, or any better condition than the present? Pardon me if I suggest that you are in the mist in which Mr. Putnam for a time found himself.

Writing with a faint hope that I may aid you to get out of this mist, allow me to suggest a supposition and put to you a question involving the point under consideration. Suppose, then, it were made certain to you, that by some irreversible decree of Providence or of Fate, your earthly existence, with that of your family, must terminate with the day on which you read these lines; suppose that with equal certainty you are assured that you and yours will then drop into non-existence, or be at once translated to a "better land," and to a home far transcending in beauty and comfort any you have ever occupied or seen; and further, that one or the other of these conditions shall be your portion, *as you may choose*—which would you choose? If you deliberately say non-existence, I must count you a riddle. If you say the better land and better home, I may count the point gained.

To my position that no system of religion, or morals, or philosophy, except that of the Bible, has ever been able to make head-way against Paganism and its kindred abomina-

tions, you respond, "I believe the Christian world with the Bible did force the use of opium, tobacco, and whisky, upon Paganism, against their wishes and their better habits."

I desire to give you the full benefit of this response, claiming, at the same time, that the "Christian world," so-called, is at most semi-Christian. It does many things which essential Christianity condemns.

But really, can you not afford to be a little more magnanimous,—and especially after admitting that the atmosphere of Paganism would not be a very suitable one in which to live and raise a family? When Christianity made its advent, the whole of Europe, as you know, excepting in so far as Judaism had found its way into certain localities, was Pagan. Your ancestors and mine were Pagans; and but for the Bible and Christianity, we and our families would doubtless have been in the same category to-day. Now, all the nations of Europe, save Turkey, and of America, save a few tribes of aborigenes, together with not a few of the inhabitants of Asia and Africa, and the islands of the ocean, are nominally Christian. If you mean to be fair and just, this is a consideration you cannot afford to brush aside as of no weight.

To the extent, then, that you value deliverance from the superstitions, the gross immoralities, and the shocking barbarities that abound in idolatrous lands, together with the refining and ennobling influences which surround your own home in a Christian land,—to that extent should you credit the Bible and Christianity as factors in the elevation of Humanity in the scale of social life and happiness, above those other factors—if factors they be—of which you make so large account,—no God; no spiritual realm; no immortality; Nature, as we behold it, is everything.

Hoping we may both attain the highest truth and the best good, I remain,

Very truly yours,

Dec. 11, 1877.

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LETTER XIII.

The Divine Authority of the Bible Rests upon its Facts, and is Revealed through Them—Observations on Revelation and Inspiration—The Facts of the Record linked to the facts of the Present—If the Record is False, When was it First Received as True, and Who Fabricated It?

FRIEND G.—I will now respond somewhat more definitely to your inquiries touching the questions of Revelation, Inspiration, and the Divine authority of the Bible. From your communication of July 8, 1875, I quote as follows:

"I believe I am now justified in saying that you give up the leading point which I have incessantly urged before you, namely, that there is no word of God nor even word of Christ. You admit the point, at least by inference, that God never wrote, and also that Christ never wrote. This I now consider settled. . . . You seem to attach some importance to the fact that the apostles wrote the Testament, though perhaps 30 or 40 years after Christ's death. To this I attach no importance, and the point is not worth disputing; but I dispute the truth of the record in many respects . . . the miracles are probably the most prominent lies it contains. As a book for the age in which it was written, it would not at the present day attract much attention, excepting for its pretension to divine inspiration and authority."

Although you have made these inquiries, soliciting my views, it seems evident from your communications from first to last, that you have not expected to get from me satisfactory

answers,—that they cannot, indeed, be so answered as to remove your skepticism. Without waiting for such answers as I might voluntarily give, you have constantly interposed objections, which you claim to be insuperable, against revelation in any form; against any existence, even, not obvious to our natural senses; against the subject-matter of much of the Bible, as either offensive in character or impossible in the nature of things; and against the credibility of the writers of the Bible records.

It seemed obviously necessary, therefore, that I should first make it appear that your objections are groundless or insufficient. This I have endeavored to do; and in dealing with some of them I have at the same time shown that they are at war with certain facts of human experience which go to support the authority of the Bible and the truth of Christianity.

Waiving for the time the question of the special inspiration of the Old and New Testament records, I have endeavored to show that the leading facts which they state—if facts they are—are abundant evidence of] the divine authority of the Bible and divine origin of Christianity. The evidence is in the facts themselves, whether the writers were specially inspired to state them just as we find them, or simply made an honest record of them without such inspiration. The facts could not have transpired otherwise than through divine interposition.

What are some of these facts? They are these:—Some eighteen centuries since, there appeared in Palestine a personage known as Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be a Teacher sent from God, in accordance with the predictions of Hebrew prophets as recorded in their Scriptures then extant. This personage, in furtherance and attestation of his mission, taught the people what he claimed to be the truth of God, and the way of right living, and in the presence of great multitudes of people wrought the most wonderful works,—such as the instantaneous restoration of the sick, and blind, and deaf, and dumb,

and lame, and paralytic, and lunatic, to soundness of body and mind; and in two instances raised the dead to life.

At the commencement of his ministry, he chose from among his followers twelve men that they might be his constant companions and the special witnesses of his doctrines and precepts and life and works, and thus be qualified to go forth after his departure and testify thereof to the world. His ministry was closed by his death upon the cross, and his resurrection after three days (in accordance with his own prediction), and his subsequent ascension.

After his departure, in obedience to his instructions, his apostles went forth among the nations, delivering their testimony—beginning at Jerusalem. In this work, laboring and enduring with the zeal of martyrs, they spent their lives. Endued with power from on high, they commended and enforced their teaching by miracles of healing which they wrought in the name of Jesus. So successful were they in the few years of their ministry, that they made converts in great numbers and founded churches and communities of disciples in all the principal cities and countries of the then known world. So notorious, indeed, were their teachings and operations, and so strong a hold did they obtained on the masses of the people, that notwithstanding all their measures were peaceful and law-abiding, they were accused of turning the world up-side down.

Such are the facts, according to the record made by the apostles and their co-laborers,—made by the very men who witnessed what transpired during the ministry of Jesus, and who were the chief actors in the scenes of the succeeding thirty or forty years.

And then, outside of this record, we have these leading facts:—First, that this record has come down to us through eighteen centuries substantially as we have it, in the keeping of the Christian church,—for whose existence for the same length of time, no conceivable cause can be assigned, aside from the facts of such record; second, that there is no counter-record,—no record contemporaneous with the record in ques-

tion, showing that the alleged leading facts of such record were ever called in question by those who had ample opportunity to know whether they were true or false, and the strongest possible motives for denial, if they were simply inventions.

With such a state of facts, does it not seem rather trivial to inquire, by way of objection, whether this record was specially inspired? You claim that it would not now attract much attention "excepting for the pretension of its divine inspiration." You were probably never more mistaken. There is a commanding significance in the facts themselves. Such "pretension," unsupported, would amount to nothing. It is their profound faith in the facts stated that gives the record overwhelming weight in the minds of the people. Undermine these alleged facts—show them to be falsehoods, or invalidate the evidence on which they rest—and you will have no occasion to inquire about the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

Although it seems a matter of minor importance, in the view I take, I will yet say a few words on the subject of inspiration—what it is and what it involves—in connection with revelation in general; I therefore invite your attention to the following observations:

1. Revelation, in the sense intended, means a communication, direct or indirect, from God to man. We may say, in general, that God reveals himself in the laws and operations of the material world, in the constitution of man, in the dispensations of Providence, and as stated in the Bible.

Our concern, just now, is only with what is set forth in such record. The revelation was not always in the same manner. (Heb. i: 1.) Sometimes it seemed to be direct from heaven, as when Jesus was baptized, and when he was transfigured, when there came "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son." (Mat. iii: 17, xvii: 5, and parallel passages.) Sometimes it came through inspiration, as when "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II. Peter i: 21.)

2. This inspiration is an impression somehow made upon the human mind by the Divine Spirit, by which the mind acquires more vivid conceptions of truth, or apprehends truths not otherwise known, and by virtue of which extraordinary gifts are conferred and natural endowments are quickened. It comes, I apprehend, in accordance with the laws of the human mind, and manifests itself more or less in conformity with the peculiarities of individuals. And thus it is that some are fitted for one mission or kind of work, and some for another—all having the same grand end in view. (I. Cor. xii: 4-6.) It is equally true, I apprehend, that there are degrees of inspiration, by which I mean that some who are inspired, ascend to a higher plane of truth than others, and some again still higher, and so on, until the highest possible is reached.

It follows, of course, that the highest inspiration gives the broadest and clearest view of truth and right, and that he who has it is entitled to speak with the highest authority. It follows, also, that not every one who is inspired is therefore free from every kind and degree of imperfection and error,—that everything he says is absolute truth, and everything he does is undeniably right. Only Jesus stands thus preëminent. He was not only “without sin,” but received “the spirit without measure.” (John iii: 34.)

The apostles were not impeccable nor in all things infallible. They confessed this. They sometimes differed and had sharp contentions among themselves, and their utterances were sometimes “by permission, and not of commandment.” (Acts xv: 1, xv: 36-39; Gal. ii: 11-14; I. Cor. vii: 6.) But they were so far inspired as to fit them completely for the extraordinary work they had to do. This was promised them. “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” (John xv: 26; Luke xxi: 15.) That this promise was fulfilled, the record and subsequent history bear ample evidence. With unfault-

ering faith and unflinching courage, in the face of all foes and all obstacles, they prosecuted their mission to the end, and planted the Christian church on a foundation which the "gates of hell" have found immovable.

3. We are not called upon to accept the Bible, nor Jesus, nor his apostles, on account of any "pretension" to inspiration which they or either of them make. Jesus said of himself, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John x: 37; v: 36.

4. It is important to note the distinction between the essential subject-matter of revelation, and the vehicle through which it is expressed. Revelation is one thing; the record of it is another. The former is divine; the latter is human. The former is perfect and infallible; the latter is imperfect and fallible.

The record comes to us in human language, which must be interpreted according to the ordinary laws of language. Its import is not to be reached through adherence to the mere letter, and by attaching to its words and phrases an invariable meaning; but through its scope and spirit.

Jesus said to his hearers, "I am the bread of life." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John vi: 48, 53.) Some of them took this in a literal sense, and complained of it as "a hard saying." Jesus in explanation said,— "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

In harmony with this, if not in the same sense, Paul said that he and his co-laborers were "made able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (II. Cor. iii: 6.) This rule applies with special force to all parts of the record which are allegorical, and in which metaphor abounds.

5. There is no pretense in the record that the writers were inspired to write it, in every part, just as they did, or that every part of it is of equal authority. Many things stated are circumstantial, incidental, and comparatively unimportant; and many are stated, especially in the Old Testament, which do not purport to stand on any authority other than that of the writer, or of those whose utterances are given. Such portions embrace matters of fact, opinion, and sentiment, in respect to which special revelation would seem to be superfluous. To state such matters truly, only intelligence and honesty would seem to be necessary.

6. Persons in whose behalf inspiration is alleged, are always treated in the Bible as intelligent moral agents, and therefore competent, in the use of their unaided natural powers, to perform any service or do any work assigned them not needing supernatural aid. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose they had such aid only when incompetent for their work without it.

7. Different portions of the Bible were written by different persons, in different languages—some of them, at first, no doubt, in hieroglyphics—and at different and distant periods of time, and under greatly varying circumstances. This would, of course, give to the record a great variety of aspects, and involve more or less uncertainty as to the precise meaning and authority of some portions of it.

8. The Mosaic Code was a politico-religious institution, framed for the government and training-up of a people just emerged from centuries of servitude in the midst of a pagan nation, designed to deliver them from idolatry and instruct them in the worship and service of Jehovah. Its purely political provisions, though having their foundation in right and justice, were not made specially incumbent on any people but the Hebrews. Its ritual and ceremonial requirements, while having a present spiritual significance and use, were also, in some respect, typical of the economy which was to succeed.

The provisions, requirements, and sanctions of this Code are to be studied and judged in the light of the peculiar char-

acter and surroundings of this people, and the singular and prominent part they were destined to act among the nations, in the drama of human existence on earth.

9. If I am substantially correct in the premises I have indicated, it would seem nothing remarkable if many passages of Scripture could be separated from their proper connections and thrown into such juxtaposition as to show a medley of incongruities, contradictions, and absurdities—seeming or real. Neither should it be counted a matter of surprise if we find—especially in the Old Testament—some things required, or prohibited, or “winked at,” which would be regarded, at the present day, as trivial, or superfluous, or burdensome, or inhuman,—and some representations made that are not in accordance with the notions of propriety prevalent among us.

10. I have already presented considerations going to show the inspiration of Jesus and his apostles, and the Divine authority of the New Testament record. I will now speak more particularly of the Old Testament in this respect.

At the time of the advent of Jesus, the Old Testament had been in existence and in the hands of his countrymen for centuries, substantially as we now have it. The two Testaments are indissolubly linked together. The New testifies to the authority of the Old. Whenever, in the former, the Scriptures are referred to, the Old Testament writings are meant; and they are always referred to as reliable authority. They are called “Scriptures,” “Holy Scriptures,” “Living Oracles,” “Oracles of God,” “Word of God,” etc. Portions of them are designated “The Law of Moses,” “Moses,” “The Prophets,” “The Psalms.” Of these Scriptures it is said that they “were given by inspiration of God;” that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” and that they are a “sure word of prophecy.” (Luke xxiv: 27, 44, 45; II. Tim. iii: 15–17; Acts vii: 38; Rom. iii: 2; Mark vii: 13; II. Peter i: 19–21.)

11. What I wish to call your especial attention to here, is the fact that the mission of Christ was foretold, as recorded in

the Old Testament, many centuries before it happened, and in such a manner as to indicate its leading features. On this matter we are not left to our own interpretation and application of particular passages. The application is made by Christ and his apostles.

Near the commencement of his ministry, while in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus read from the book of the prophet Esaias—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," etc. Having finished reading he sat down, and all eyes being fixed on him, he said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke iv: 18-21.)

At another time, to the unbelieving Jews he said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." "If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." (John v: 39, 46.)

After his resurrection, he took especial pains to make his apostles understand that what he had done and undergone was in pursuance of the prophetic utterances of these Scriptures. "Then said he unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. . . . And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me," etc. (Luke xxiv: 25-27, 44.)

During his ministry, in addressing the Jews, speaking of Abraham, who lived centuries before Moses, he said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." (John viii: 56.)

To the same effect is the testimony of the apostles. Peter, addressing the Jews after the Resurrection, said, "For Moses truly said unto the Fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me. . . . Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow, as many as have spoken, have likewise fore-

told of those days." (Acts iii: 22-24. See also Acts ii: 22-32; iii: 18.)

Paul, in like manner, refers to the Old Testament record. Addressing the Jews in a synagogue at Thessalonica, he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." (Acts xvii: 2, 3.) So in his defence before Agrippa, he declares that he had said "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead," etc. (Acts xxvi: 22, 23.) And in writing to the Corinthians he alleged that Christ died, and was buried, and rose again, "according to the Scriptures." (I. Cor. xv: 3, 4.)

And so it appears—if we credit the New Testament, we must credit the Old. If Jesus and his apostles were inspired, so were Moses and the prophets. If the New Testament has the Divine sanction, so has the Old. With us, the evidence of such inspiration is found first in the facts revealed in the New Testament—which facts you most strangely call in question.

May I not now again ask you to candidly look these alleged facts in the face, and reconsider your denial? You "dispute the truth of the record in many respects," and pronounce the miracles "lies." You ought to be able to give the very strongest reasons for so doing. You do what the early opposers of Christianity were not bold enough to do. Julian, Hierocles, Porphyry and Celsus, its early enemies, and men of great ability, opposed Christianity, but were compelled to admit the substantial truth of the New Testament records,—ascribing the miracles to magic or the influence of the devil.

Is it not preposterous to suppose that they believed these records to be false, and yet admitted their truth, when their exposure as falsehoods would have undermined the whole fabric against which they were directing their best energies? Is not the fact of such admission the strongest evidence possible, in connection with the affirmative testimony we have,

that the substantial allegations of the record were undenied and undeniable?

Consider how closely linked are the facts of the record with the facts of the present. The record is a palpable fact "which our hands have handled." Christianity is an institution in whose presence we live. We trace both back through the centuries to their contemporaneous origin. The genuineness of the record is established beyond cavil. The facts it states were proclaimed orally, far and wide among the nations, for thirty or forty years, immediately after they transpired, in the face of great opposition, by those who were personally cognizant of them, and who made and published the record.

Of the authenticity of this record, there is no known contemporaneous denial. But now, after eighteen centuries, you come in with your partial negative. You imply that the record may be in part true. But unless you are ready to yield everything, can you afford to admit so much? Bear in mind that every part of the record rests on the same general authority; that the alleged miracles were very numerous; and that their recital, with the incidents connected, comprises a very considerable portion of the entire record. If the writers lied so by wholesale about the miracles, how do you find room for confidence in any of their statements? What reason have you to believe, for example, that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount? Nay, what reason have you to believe, if you do, that there ever was such a person on earth? It seems to me that—denying the miracles—the only consistent thing for you to do, is to deny the record *in toto*,—to take bold ground that it is an out-and-out fabrication, and furnishes no evidence, even, that there ever existed such a personage as Jesus of Nazareth.

But, then, as a reasonable and common-sense man—which I am sure you are in all ordinary matters—you will feel bound, if you wish to come at the essential truth, to ascertain at what period in the Christian era, and by whom, it was fabricated, and how it obtained such wide-spread credence.

You have admitted, as well you might, that the writings composing the New Testament were in existence, substantially as we have them, in the days of Origen, who flourished some two hundred years after the death of Christ. You will not pretend that they could have been fabricated and published near his time, with no question of their genuineness and authenticity on his part. Can you give any reason, satisfactory to yourself, for believing that they were fabricated at any date? They exist. They are genuine, or they are fabrications. If the latter, when were they fabricated and first published, and by whom? When were they first received as true, and how came they to be so accepted?

I trust you will regard the matters involved in these questions as so important that you cannot afford to ignore them, and that you will have no disposition to evade their force.

As ever, yours for the truth,

DECEMBER 10, 1877.

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LETTER XIV.

Review—Conscience Recognizes a Higher Power—Its Nature and Office—A False View—Does God Control Conscience?—Responsibility Implies Volition—A Condoning Process—Nature a Spontaneity Demanding Nothing—Not So—One Part of Nature against Another—A Tangle.

FRIEND G. :—I received your communication of September 24, 1877, about the day of its date. Although of great length—covering sixty-eight pages of legal cap—I find it to be largely a reiteration in substance of what you had formerly presented, and to which I had responded. I have looked over it from time to time, but have not until recently found it convenient to put in shape a formal answer. I propose now to notice its more important points in a number of successive communications.

You say you “do not abandon the ground heretofore taken on the subject of Nature and of God.” What was this ground? It is stated in part in your first communication, substantially on this wise:—The God of the Bible is changeable, vindictive, cruel, and tyrannical, while the God of Creation is of diametrically opposite character, as shown by what we behold in Nature.

Claiming that you were widely mistaken as to the teaching of the Bible, I called on you to reconcile the evils which happen in the processes of Nature with the character you ascribe to it,—insisting that you were bound to do this, before you could be entitled to an answer to your arraignment of the Bible. A simple appeal to what happens in Nature seemed to

convince you of your error, for you responded as follows:—"I yield to your strictures on the characteristics of the God of Nature."

I understood you in this to give up your position. You have nevertheless kept repeating your allegations of the character in question against the Bible; and now, with no attempt to vindicate Nature, you inform me that you maintain the ground heretofore taken on the subject of Nature and of God. Can you yield a position and afterward logically resort to it as though you had not given it up?

I have maintained, and do maintain, that the Bible makes mention of no evils and of no wickedness, such as you complain of, not duplicated in the history of the world outside of the Bible. This position you virtually admit. What headway do you make, then, against the Bible by such charges? The most you can claim is that the Bible opens no better prospect to sentient being than does Nature. But, suppose you are mistaken in ascribing to the Bible the character you do. Suppose it is of opposite character. Suppose, further, that the Bible reveals an effective remedy for all the evils and all the wickedness which afflict the human family—what then? You are found warring against the light of heaven, and rejecting the best gift of God to man.

Constrained to acknowledge the untenableness of your position in regard to the characteristics of the "God of Creation," with which you set out—and explaining, first, that by God of Creation you meant God of Nature, and then, presently, only Nature, and that you do not believe in a "personal God,"—you took the ground that no responsibility attaches to Nature—that no apology is needed on account of its ordeals.

Premising that Nature embraces man and all that pertains to him, I inquired what you can know of murder, slavery, robbery, and seduction, as crimes. I held that if you condemn these, you come upon Bible grounds, where a personal God is recognized, and where you have no right to stand. You responded that you *do* condemn crime, and do *not* recognize

a personal God, and that you regard no power higher than that of human agency. You defy me and the whole religious world to prove you wrong in this. The proof you want is the performance of a miracle. Because I admit you cannot be reached in this way, you very complacently accept the admission as a "candid surrender." You could have had just such a surrender at the commencement of our correspondence, but it would have settled nothing; it settles nothing now.

Declining to accommodate you with a miracle, I urged the fact of a moral element in man's nature which recognizes a distinction in moral actions as being either right or wrong, accompanied by a sense of responsibility. I urged that this sense of responsibility is evidence of the existence of a higher power, and that this higher power is presumably a personal God. In this matter I appealed to your own consciousness, and asked why you condemn crime; whether you do it because human laws condemn it, or because your own conscience condemns it; and if your conscience condemns it, why it does so. Assuming that you and every rational man feels this sense of responsibility, I asked how such a feeling of responsibility could be impressed upon the universal human conscience, if, indeed, there is no higher power.

And how do you now respond? You say that "conscience is an essential property of the mind"; that "its brightness and strength" depend on "culture," and not on one's "beliefs"; that it "is the basis of right and wrong," with "grade or quality" according to culture. "Therefore," say you, "what is regarded as right among a debased people, is often regarded as wrong among a cultured people. Accordingly, this standard may and does run very low and very high among different people." This variation, you argue, could not exist if a "higher power" were concerned in the premises.

You seem shy of my questions. Instead of answering one of those above stated, as I ask it, you frame one for me to suit yourself, thus:—"In other words, how could the human family be honest, if there were no God to compel them to it?" I beg your pardon, I asked no such question. I

accept as true, however, what you say in answer:—"Man is honest because it is right to be honest." And here I ask, Is this not a confession on your part, unwittingly made, it may be, of the existence of a higher power? "Right" implies a standard or law according to which it conforms; and law implies a law-giver or higher power. Thus we come to the vital point. It seems difficult, indeed, to say anything at all on this subject, in accordance with a common-sense view of things, without recognizing in some form this important truth.

You say in the same connection that "honesty based simply on the fear of God, or of punishment, is not honesty at all." Admitting this to be true, it does not follow that dishonesty has nothing to fear.

Again. In closing my communication of May 26, 1877, speaking of the conscious wrong-doer, I say and ask:—"Such offender, however much against his will, must carry his avenger with him wherever he goes. Now, if there is no higher power than human agency, why is he thus held? Why is it that neither his own, nor any other human power can deliver him?" Framing for me a question to suit yourself, as before, you ask, "Why should he be delivered?" and go on to say that "Christian priests and popes do relieve in such cases for cash paid in hand."

You, perhaps, misapprehend my question, at least in part, supposing me to mean deliverance from guilt and punishment, simply. This I did not mean. I meant deliverance from the "power" which holds one responsible. You will understand my meaning when I say that every moral being is at all times responsible to a higher power for all his moral acts; that he is conscious of such responsibility; and that there is no deliverance from it.

The pardon of an offender works no such deliverance. You will not yourself deny that you feel a consciousness of responsibility for your acts, however you may deny or ignore the power which holds you to such responsibility. And I venture to affirm, that you will not claim that you can rid

yourself of such consciousness without in some manner brutifying yourself. Now, what is that higher power which so holds you, if it is not a personal God?

I regret the view you take in regard to conscience. You are right in saying it is an essential property of the mind. But when you speak of it as a standard of right and wrong dependent on culture, and moving up and down, "very high" and "very low," it seems to me you are very wide of the truth. The essential idea of a standard is that it is unvarying. We have standards of length, and weight, and quantity. The yard, the pound, the gallon, and the bushel, are always the same. If the human conscience is the changeable thing you represent, it is no standard.

To me your view appears vicious as well as false. You virtually say there is no absolute right; that right and wrong swap places according to men's notions. You may as well say there is no absolute truth; that truth and error are interchangeable in like manner.

The truth is, it is not, strictly speaking, the province of conscience to determine what is right and what is wrong. The judgment does this. Conscience says, *Do right; avoid wrong*. If wrong is done, it is the fault of erroneous judgment, or of overpowering passion or prejudice. Conscience never says, *Do wrong*. Men led to believe there is no absolute right, will be apt to be lax in their notions of truth, and duty, and honor. I have no doubt you push your theory in the way of argument further than you would be willing to go in practice.

Because I hold that conscience is the vice-gerent of a higher power, and that this power is a personal God, to whom man is responsible, you represent me as arguing that "God gives and controls conscience," and urge that as he is Almighty, and yet fails to have his will done, he must be "a most miserable God."

I do not argue that God exercises such control, but do insist that conscience *always obeys* the higher power. The trouble is, that man does not always obey his conscience; and

when he does not, this monitor chastises him, and will continue such chastisement while the wrong is persisted in.

Upon the supposition that God controls the conscience, you ask, "Why does not God make everybody honest?" God controls the conscience only in the sense that the voice of conscience in the human soul is the voice of God. The response of conscience is as true as that of the echo to the voice it echoes.

A pertinent question would be, Why does not God compel everybody to obey his conscience? To this question it is sufficient here to answer, that God has constituted man a moral being, and that in the very nature of the case, obedience to his conscience must be voluntary. Compulsion is out of the question. Honesty can therefore exist only through voluntary obedience to the rule of right—"because it is right to be honest," as you say.

In connection with this subject, you speak of the belief of Papists that crime is condoned and the conscience relieved by confession and the payment of money to the Pope or priests; and represent that Protestants believe much the same—substituting prayers to an unknown Pope in the room of such confession and money.

For obvious reasons, I do not undertake to defend against all of your statements, whether well or ill-founded. All that you can expect is that I shall defend the Bible and my own views of its teaching. What I have here to say is this:—The Bible holds every wrong-doer deserving of punishment. This is threatened and inflicted,—first, to deter from wrong acts and protect the innocent; and second, as a means of reformation. It may be said to consist in the degradation and sense of guilt and shame which man brings upon himself, together with whatever other consequences his wrong acts involve.

In respect to this punishment, it is declared that God will by no means clear the guilty. It must, therefore, continue while disobedience lasts. When the sinner reforms and returns to his allegiance, he is received and thereafter treated as though he had not offended. I know of no other "con-

doning" process. The treatment of a son who has rebelled against parental authority, and afterward returns to his allegiance and is restored to favor, may be taken as an illustration. We have an example in the New Testament in the case of the Prodigal Son.

You make what seems to me a futile attempt to get out of the dilemma in which you find yourself in this matter. To my suggestion that you are inconsistent in condemning crime, while you maintain that the operations of Nature involve no moral wrong, you respond:—"There is nothing in all this. Nature, so far as we are concerned, may be said to be a spontaneity, a gratuity; it gives everything we find and requires nothing absolutely."

Whatever may be said of the appropriateness of your description of Nature as a "spontaneity," your assertion that Nature "requires nothing"—which seems to have been put in to help you out—is simply untrue, and avails you naught. On the contrary, Nature is inexorable. It has laws, penal in character, which cannot be violated with impunity.

I have heretofore urged upon you the fact—which you have not questioned—that man, with all that pertains to him, is a part of Nature. All that he is, and all that he does, must be taken into account, then, in determining what the processes and ordeals of Nature involve.

You defend Nature as not subject to condemnation, and yet you say you do condemn crime. How is it that you, a part of Nature, can condemn as a crime the act of another man, also a part of Nature, when there is nothing in Nature to be condemned? Do you not do so contrary to Nature? Recollect, you maintain that a miracle cannot be performed because it would be contrary to Nature and impossible. If, then, you condemn crime contrary to Nature, do you not perform a miracle? Nay, do you not yourself become a miracle? It seems to me, at any rate, that you are in a tangle in this matter, and that there is for you only one way out.

Your position that Nature needs no apology—that there is nothing in its ordeals to condemn—is in perfect accord

with your theory of no personal God, and no higher power; and your emphatic declaration that you do condemn crime, is in accord with your own nature. The truth is, your theory is a libel on Nature, and at war with human consciousness. Your way out is through renunciation of your theory. So it seems to me. Very truly yours,

DEC. 12, 1878.

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LETTER XV.

Man brought into the World Encumbered and Doomed—The Bible View—God is Almighty—Means of Reformation—Christianity and the Processes of Nature—The Origin of Man—A Confession—A Theory—Nature Spontaneous in a Certain Order—Is Nature Self-Endowed?—Is Matter Eternal?—Is it Intelligent?—Does the Intelligence Manifested in Nature Have Its Seat in Matter, or Out of It?—If Out of It, What Follows?—The Laws of Nature.

FRIEND G.:—The following, in substance, is one of your arraignments of the Bible:

The God of the Bible "placed us here under very unfavorable circumstances, and immediately encumbered us with an oppressive, tyrannical, and irredeemable debt." He announced a special curse upon woman, in advance, because Eve ate the forbidden apple, though he knew all the time she would eat it. "He made us just as we are, and then wants to broil and roast us in the blue blazes of hell, his cremating furnace, which is so constructed as never to finish the job. And this is our Father!! Great Jupiter! are we not relieved to hear that the monkey is our father?" This is one way in which you make out a "difference" between the God of the Bible and "unassuming Nature," and attempt to justify your assaults upon the Bible.

I am aware, and admit, that some interpretations of the Bible furnish ground, in part, for your imputations. These interpretations, however, I hold, are to be attributed to the influence of creeds and dogmas framed and announced in the Dark Ages of the past; and that, in so far as they attribute to

Deity the tyrannical disposition and conduct you ascribe to him, they are unsupported by the record, and are fast passing away.

The Bible does, indeed, represent God as our Father—as our good Father—as kind to the evil and unthankful, even. And here I would have you remember what I have before called your attention to,—that God has threatened and will inflict no punishment on his children inconsistent with his character as such Father. Certainly, if we credit the record, we are bound to remember that he cannot deny himself. And if we do not credit it, it is but just that we make it consistent, if we can. Further along I shall have something to say bearing more or less directly on this point.

You represent me as ignoring the idea that the God of the Bible is Almighty, and suggest that “right here” is where I “seem to drown in confusion.” You claim that if Almighty, “he could reform and regenerate the people without bringing misery, strife, starvation, and brutal death to them.” You think that my position that God, “although permitting evil in the world now, and always heretofore,” will afterwards “have it all fixed right,” as you express it, “is very amusing,” and betrays this God as a “ways and means” being. You go on to state your case substantially as follows:

This God “has been 6,000 years fixing things, and in the mean time had to adopt the expedient of breeding a Son, who was obliged to be killed in a certain peculiar way, in order to save the world from sin; and still, after 1850 years” of trial, “the world is not yet saved at all.” This must “be regarded as a prolonged humbug,” and those who still trust in this God as “real innocents.”

As you have reason to know, those who believe in the essential averments of the record would state their views in different style. On this subject I submit the following observations:

God is, indeed, Almighty, but he is not, therefore, obliged to do just what you or I, or any mortal, may think he can or ought to do; and it seems folly to suggest that because

we do not see this thing and that done, no such being can exist. Neither is it implied that he can perform a deed which involves a contradiction. For example, he cannot form two mountains in close proximity without a valley between them. He cannot create a forty-year-old man in a day. He cannot instantly give to a man such a character for virtue and honesty as comes only through years of voluntary effort and struggle against adverse forces. Neither can he instantly give such character to a community or a nation.

God is omniscient as well as omnipotent. He adopts the wisest means to reach the best ends. He tries no experiments; he makes no mistakes; he suffers no defeats. And all this applies equally to his sway over the world of matter and the world of mind. Perhaps it may not be too much to say that he makes use of "ways and means" in everything he does. A careful study of the processes he adopts, with their results, may be our highest wisdom.

If the material world outside of the human race has come to its present condition through long and slow processes of development, why should it be thought a thing incredible that humanity should be subjected to a like method, and that Christianity should be made a "ways and means" process of bringing man by slow degrees, but ultimately, to the highest condition of moral excellence?

You claim that if there were such an Almighty Deity, he could reform mankind otherwise than through strife, war, and the like. He can and does use other means, as I have abundantly shown; but if, according to the Bible, he also makes these means tend to the same end, is not this just what occurs in the world, as shown by history outside of the Bible? Do not reforms in society and government sometimes come through such agencies?

And yet, the other means he is said to have adopted,—the mission of his Son into the world—his life of labor and love, and his death and resurrection, seem to suit you no better. What do you think he should have done? What, in his place, with his power and your wisdom, would you have done?

How now about the processes of Nature and their results, in this respect? You know something of the attainments of humanity, and of its capabilities without any aid from God or Jesus or the Bible. Mr. Putnam, as you quoted from him, discourses eloquently on the subject. These are his words:—"Well, then, if neither the Bible, nor Jesus, nor God, nor immortality is the supreme thing, what is? I believe in Humanity, that goodness and beauty are in it, and that it will strive after truth and attain it, and that virtues more glorious than the stars will adorn its brow."

And this, you said, is "just to the point." But now, after 1850 years of trial through Christianity, you say, "the world is not yet saved at all." Such is your estimate of the present condition of the world—which may be admitted to be true as to the portion outside of Christendom.

I regret that no better success has attended my efforts to find out what you believe touching the origin of man; whether he has existed upon the earth from all eternity, or not; and if not, how, and whence, and at what time he came into being. Whenever you touch this point, you "seem to drown in confusion." You, doubtless, believe he has been here fully 6,000 years, perhaps a million, and all of the time unaided by anything but the processes of Nature, within and without him, in his efforts to reach the goal at which "virtues more glorious than the stars" will adorn his brow.

You think 1850 years a long time for the trial of Christianity as a remedial system, and make light of its results so far. But how about the processes of Nature? If they have been in operation to the same end for 6,000, and perhaps a million years, with no better results, how much longer will it take unaided humanity to reach its objective point of moral elevation? And if you are compelled to admit that the time seems long, and the prospect dubious, how would it do to call the operation a "prolonged humbug?" And how would it do to characterize those who profess faith in it as "real innocents?" And how, if outsiders should find in the attitude of such "innocents" a little "amusement?"

To my remark touching the origin of man, that "a man is a man, and a monkey is a monkey, and so far as we know one does not grow into the other," you reply that "a God is a God and a man is a man, and so far as we know one does not grow into the other." You also claim that "it is much easier for monkey-kind to breed mankind, than it is for mankind to breed Gods," and suggest that "it required 4,000 years, longer to evolve a God than it did a man from the original monkey."

I might give you credit for this response, if it were pertinent to anything I have said, or anything that the Bible says, but it is not. Please bear in mind that your discussion is with me on the basis of the Bible, and that I have not undertaken to defend the creeds and dogmas of the religious world, past or present. Please remember, also, that all of our discussion in regard to the first man has grown out of your assertion that Jesus could not have been born without a natural father, claiming that I must show an exception to the otherwise universal rule. I inquired how the first man came. This puzzled you, and seems to keep you puzzled.

In your last, you say you understand me to claim that "the first man had a natural mother," and ask, "whence the mother?" You go on to say that if I refer to the man in the garden of Eden, I have not even suggested the case of a man "who had a mother without a natural father." Of course I have not. I have neither suggested nor thought of such a case; and I cannot conceive why you foist in such a "mother," unless to hide the fact that you are puzzled, and see no way out of the puzzle.

You say I seem to be over-anxious that you should tell me how the human race originated, and add:—"I never proposed to do such a thing, because neither I, nor you, nor anybody else can do it. We don't know, and therefore should be, and are, willing to acknowledge our ignorance on this subject, though we are entitled to a fair consideration of our theories."

This confession is reasonable and sensible, and I join you in it. I have simply referred to the Bible as authority for the

fact that God created man, not to prove *how* it was done. I have pressed you on this point, simply because you were so positive that a man could not come into being without a natural father. Having now confessed a good degree of ignorance on the subject, would it not be well to go back and confess, that for aught you know, Jesus might have been born without such a father, though you don't believe he was?

Having made the above confession, you speak more definitely than before touching your "theory." You suggest the probability, from "reason and observation," that the "soil upon the surface of the earth, vegetable life and animal life, are all the spontaneous production of Nature, and in the order named." This is a virtual admission that there was a time when man did not exist upon the earth; that there must have been a first man; and consequently, that this first man could not have had a natural father like himself.

Admitting the truth of your suggestion, does it not go to sustain the Bible account? The "order" you name was announced in the Bible thousands of years before it was discovered by scientists, of whose skill in solving the problems of existence so much account is made,—first the soil, then vegetable, and then animal life. And suppose these things are all the spontaneous product of Nature, does this fact exclude the idea of a God? By no means. And the Bible ascribes them all to the creative power of Jehovah. I invite your attention to a few thoughts on this subject.

If Nature is possessed of such spontaneous power, it is a fair question how it came by it. Is it self-endowed? Or has such endowment come from without? Professor Tyndall claims to find in matter the promise and potency of every form of life. If matter has these elements, how came they there? It may be assumed that they are inherent, and that matter is eternal. This, of course, cannot be proved. Neither, on the other hand, it may be said, can it be proved that matter is not eternal.

On this subject dogmatism seems vain. Outside of revelation, the solution of the problem is doubtless beyond

the reach of finite minds. Nevertheless, there are probabilities which indicate with greater or less clearness where the truth lies. Let us see what some of these are. And in order to do so, let us scan briefly two or three propositions which seem to involve the subject.

1. Matter is eternal, with all of its properties and possibilities ever inherent.

2. Matter is eternal, with no inherent possibilities, excepting that of bare existence.

3. Matter has been created, either with or without such possibilities inherent at the time of creation.

These propositions seem to cover the whole ground. To admit the truth of the first, is to deny the being of a separate, supreme Intelligence, self-existent, and of infinite wisdom and power. Whatever is eternal is self-existent; whatever is self-existent is independent; and whatever is independent is beyond control. If matter has such existence, there is no room for a supreme Intelligence independent of matter. Moreover, to affirm the truth of the proposition, is to affirm that matter itself is intelligent.

To affirm the truth of the second proposition, is to allow the possibility of a separate, self-existent intelligent Being, but not one of unlimited power. This proposition is therefore inconsistent with the idea of a Being self-existent and supreme.

The third proposition, it may be said, assumes that matter has been created out of nothing. Not exactly. The position that nothing cannot produce something, seems self-evident; so, also, the position that something cannot evolve itself out of nothing. But it is another question, whether a Being of infinite wisdom and power cannot create matter—whether it may not emanate from some element of his own essence.

What, now, are the probabilities on this subject? And here it is legitimate to appeal, as you do, to our "reason and observation." What is their voice in the premises? Is matter intelligent?

When we look abroad over the field of matter of which we are cognizant, we discover on every hand the most striking evidences of intelligent thought and skill in contrivance and execution. We behold these in the composition and arrangement of the materials of which our globe consists, and their adaptation to vegetable and animal life; in plant and shrub and tree, with their bloom and fruit and seed; in the myriads of living creatures which inhabit land and sea; in the ingenious mechanism of animal organism, from the tiniest animalculæ up to mastodon and man; and to crown all, in the wonderful adaptation of all grades of animal life to the respective spheres in which their lot is cast.

Does the intelligence so manifested reside in matter, or is it extraneous? Does it operate on matter from within, or from without?

True, in organized matter, instinct with life, we witness intelligence of various grades, as in the dog and in man. But as soon as the life is extinct all signs of such intelligence are gone. This is not the intelligence of which I speak. The intelligence of the dog and the man is not its own cause, but is the result of a preëxisting cause—of an intelligence which has constituted them capable of intelligence.

If we go back of all vegetable and animal life, we come to nothing but dead matter. The material composing our globe is supposed to have been, during the process of its formation, an igneous mass,—a seething fluid; and further back a vast field of fire-mist. And if we could trace it back to its original condition, however far off that may be, or may have been, we should no doubt find it all dead matter.

Dead matter, having no conscious existence, can have no intelligence. All of the intelligence, then, manifested in the operations and developments of matter, from first to last, must be the result of some extraneous cause.

And this accords, moreover, with the axiom that matter is inert. If matter cannot move except as it is acted upon, the presumption is that it cannot think; and without thought, there can be no intelligence. It seems to me that the most

that Professor Tyndall, or any scientist can say, is that he finds in matter a material that can be wrought and developed into every form of life.

It is a commonly-acknowledged truth, that the developments of the material world around us give evidence of the wisest design, the most skilful contrivance, and the profoundest thought—evidence, indeed, of infinite intelligence.

It should be borne in mind, as an indisputable truth, that back of all design, back of all contrivance, and back of all thought, there must be a designer, a contriver, a thinker. And the universal fitness of things in the material world—the complete adaptation of part to part, and of means to ends—discloses a unity of design which indicates that the intelligence which directs all of its operations is a *unit*—that the designer of all is ONE. Is it not asking too much of us to believe that this all-comprehending intelligence has its seat and center in dead primordial matter? And may we not reasonably believe that it resides in that Being who announced himself to Moses as “I AM”?

If, according to the third proposition, matter has been created, it must have had a Creator—a Creator self-existent and of infinite wisdom and power. This admitted, it is a question interesting, but less important, whether it was created with all of its possibilities inherent,—so that, without any subsequent interference on the part of its Creator, it has developed itself into the condition in which we now witness it; or whether, lacking any or all of these possibilities at first, it has been endowed with them from time to time, by new acts of interference; or whether, again, the interference and supervision of the Creator have been perpetual.

A word in reference to each of the above hypotheses:—The first seems to suppose that when God created matter, he did all that was necessary to put the machinery of the universe into running order, and in such condition that it would run itself forever—and then retired; the second, that retiring in like manner, he has returned occasionally and made some new arrangement of its materials, or added some new forces

to achieve results not before provided for; the third, that he is an ever-present force in all his universe.

Admitting the existence of such Creator, "reason" would seem to pronounce in favor of the hypothesis last named. And if he must be so present, it seems an immaterial question, whether what at any time would seem to be a phenomenon, is the result of his immediate interference, or is the product of a force already in being, but not before so revealed.

Within the present century the works of Nature have attracted great attention, and many of her secrets have been revealed. This has involved an intense study of what are called the laws of Nature; and whether as a necessary sequence, or not, there seems to have prevailed with not a few a fashion of speaking of these laws as though they had a kind of independent existence; almost as though God has now nothing to do with them; as though, at least, any interference with their regular operations, as we witness them, is not to be thought of.

The true view, as seems to me, is that God, from the necessities of his being, must be ever present in all his works; and that what we call the laws of Nature are simply the expression of his will, and the methods by which he works. To suppose that he cannot dispense with forces that have answered their ends, and introduce new ones, either directly or indirectly, to accomplish other ends, is to suppose that Nature has somehow eluded his grasp.

Hoping we may yet sometime see more nearly "eye to eye," I remain,

Very truly yours,

Dec. 21, 1878.

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LETTER XVI.

A Complaint—An Answer—God as a Father—God and Nature—An Effort toward Reconciliation Needed—Nature and Art—Imbecility—An Easy Task.

FRIEND G.:—After my communication of the 21st was prepared, excepting a few sentences, I received your note, of the 16th in reference to my communication of the 12th inst. Before pursuing further the line I had marked out, I pause to respond to your note, that I may not appear to disregard what you say in the way of complaint.

You seem to write under a sense of injustice done you in the way of wrong statement, misquotation, misinterpretation, etc. I trust you will believe me when I say that if I am chargeable with anything of the kind, it should be laid to the account of inadvertance. You say, rather sharply, if not harshly:

"On page 1 you say, 'largely a reiteration.' Why don't you tell the truth, and say it is *largely* a verbatim quotation of the (so-called) divinely inspired Bible—and that you are asked to say whether you believe that to be the true word of your God, and that you avoid doing so because you are ashamed to do it and sign your name to it?"

In the duplicate I have, after the phrase "largely a reiteration," come the words "in substance." If they do not appear in what you have, it is an oversight. True, you quote verbatim a long list of passages, inquiring whether they are the

word of God, etc. This is what you had done in the case of a smaller number of like character. Hence, I considered you were, "in substance," going over the same ground. And what I said, does not exclude the idea that you had presented some new matter.

You have, in my communication of Dec. 10, 1877, my views in general touching the authority of the Scriptures, intended to cover the whole ground of the Old and New Testaments. I expect yet to notice more particularly the passages in question, and hope you will have patience to wait until I do. You have my name to what I have written, and you may be sure I shall not be "ashamed" to sign it to what I may yet write.

I quote from you again, as follows:

"On page 10 you quote me correctly, then immediately represent me as saying that '*Nature requires nothing.*' And then you tell me that this is 'simply untrue.' Your representation in the above words of what I did say is 'simply untrue.' When the sentence is given honestly and in full it is sufficiently true, taken in connection with the context, and for the purpose for which it was given. It was used to illustrate and compare the *Nature* of the universe with the *God* of your infallible Bible," etc.

I have carefully considered the "connection" in which the language of the quotation is found, and the purpose for which you say it was made, and can find nothing to justify you in saying that my second quotation is untrue or dishonestly made. The second quotation, as you give it, includes three words, while the copy I have includes only two words between the quotation marks, thus—Nature "requires nothing." Even as you give it, I cannot see that it varies the sense of the full sentence. I re-quoted simply what I wished to deny. I might have included the word "absolutely" as it stands in connection.

And now, with or without this word, and giving you the benefit of all you claim as to the "connection," and as to the object you say you had in view, I am obliged to say that, in

my judgment, the declaration that Nature "requires nothing," either "absolutely," or otherwise, is not only not "sufficiently true," but is devoid of all truth. I gave a reason for my denial, which I hope you may consider.

I note what you say of the God of the Bible as "almighty," "omniscient," etc., and as such "responsible"; and your declaration that "on this account, he is never to be compared with a human father." I admit his responsibility as fully as you can ask, and claim that it extends to him in his confessed relation of Father, as well as Creator and Sovereign; and I bear this in mind in all I write.

You have deliberately made up your mind that there is no God, and that the Bible, as to any claim to divine authority, is a fraud. In this, I cheerfully give you credit for sincerity. But does not your zeal, or your prejudice, lead you too far? Do you take an impartial view of the representations you find in the Bible? Are you willing to allow such an interpretation as will make them consistent, if possible? If the Bible represents God as the Father of mankind, as it does, should not this representation give cast to those which treat of his dealings with them? And should not the latter, if possible, be so interpreted as to make them consistent with such character?

You have all along scouted the Bible representation of God as a Father; and now you claim he cannot be such, if almighty, omniscient, etc. I can see no inconsistency here. You bring in to help you the fact that God subjects man to dire calamities. Do you forget that Nature, every now and then, drives the plow-share of ruin through families, communities, and nations? But the God of the Bible, you think, ought not to do this, because he is almighty and omniscient, and might prevent it. Is he wiser and more powerful than you believe Nature to be? (You will recollect your estimate of his intelligence. He did not know, when he produced the Bible, that the world is round, and that the sun does not rise and set.) You know something of the powers of Nature as disclosed in the machinery of the universe, and of the skill

evinced in the wonderful developments of vegetable and animal life on the earth. Why has not the wisdom and power so manifested been sufficient to prevent the disastrous ordeals which come so often and so overwhelmingly?

You will recollect how, in the commencement of our discussion, you spoke of the works of creation as evincing "eternal order, harmony, and goodness." Now, if you can reconcile the calamitous visitations of Nature with the beneficence you ascribe to her reign, I think you can reconcile, in like manner, the representations the Bible makes of God's dealings with men, with his character as their Father—their good Father.

I think if you could make up your mind to try this work of reconciliation in good earnest, first in Nature, if you see fit, and then in the Bible, and not seek to put the worst possible construction on the Bible representations, but rather the one which will best accord with the character of God as a Father, you would neither be driven nor tempted to call him, as you do, "*a monster, a tyrant, and a devil*"; and you might, happily, come into such a state of mind that you would be "*ashamed to do it, and sign your name to it.*"

I quote you further, as follows:

"You seem to claim that man's acts are a part of Nature, and thereby you attempt to manufacture an inconsistency for me. Well! Well!! This is not logic to say if a man build a house that house is a part of Nature. Will you not observe a difference between Nature and Art?"

True, for certain purposes, such a distinction is recognized; but in a question of the kind in hand it has no place. Take from your house all that comes of Nature—the wood, stone, brick, iron, glass, etc., and the agency of the natural powers of man in putting the materials together, and what would be left of the house? In the great system, the habitations of man which he builds for himself are as truly a part of Nature and its operations, as are the abodes of the beaver, the bee, and the bird, which they construct for themselves.

I have all along insisted that Nature comprises man, and all that he is and does; and to this, until now, you have uttered no word of dissent. I do not see that you are yet at all relieved of the necessity of the work of reconciliation to which I have so faithfully exhorted you.

You close your note as follows :

"But I am surprised at the apparent imbecility of your position."

If such is really my position, you should have an easy task. I ask in its behalf no forbearance. I have no right to. Neither have I a right to spare your positions or arguments. In other respects we can both afford, I trust, to deal leniently.

In the Brotherhood of a Humanity above all philosophies, and ologies, and isms, I am, as ever, truly yours,

DEC. 24, 1878.

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LETTER XVII.

**If the New Testament Record of Miracles is Proof, why not that of Others?
—The Difference—What Miracles Should Have Been Wrought to Convince
the World—The Skeptical Theory—The True Theory—What Has Been
Accomplished a Promise of What is to Come.**

FRIEND G.:—You make the strange assertion that I “give no proof why we should believe in the New Testament miracles and reject all others,” and “volunteer” to give the reason why I hold as I do. I have been “educated” into “a firm habit” so to believe, “even to a degree of sensitiveness,” with my mind “chained” down, as it were, and “not allowed to think differently.”

I might return the compliment, but it would prove nothing. I am not insensible of the truth that much allowance is to be made on account of the influence of education and the force of habit; but I have long since adopted the maxim of Paul, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” In such ordeal, I have no fears that the truth will suffer.

Because I spoke of the account of the miracles we have in the New Testament as “proof,” you think I am inconsistent, if I do not admit as of equal validity the record we have of other miracles. You should bear in mind the circumstances and surroundings of the case, as I set them forth,—how Jesus healed all manner of sickness and disease, restored from all kinds of infirmity, and even raised the dead; how these miracles were of great number and variety; how they were

wrought in open day and in the face of bitter opposition; how, after his resurrection, his disciples wrought like miracles in his name, and in the face of their enemies, who confessed they could not deny them; how afterward, while the events were yet fresh in the public mind, a record of the facts was made by at least four of his disciples, who agree in their testimony; how the record so made was published throughout surrounding cities and countries, so as to give ample opportunity for refutation, if the record was false; how the early apostates from Christianity confessed that Jesus wrought such miracles as are ascribed to him; and how we have no record extant showing that those who had the best opportunity and the strongest motives for doing so, ever impeached the record made by these disciples and now in our hands. It was in view of such considerations I pronounced this record "proof," and I see no reason to qualify the statement. In our courts, a record made on voluntary confession of judgment is final.

My illustration of the eagles, genuine and spurious, was to the point. You present what you acknowledge to be spurious to discredit what is claimed to be genuine. In respect to the alleged miracles, account of which we have outside of the Bible, we have no dispute. So far as any super-human power is concerned, we both count them spurious. What you have to do is to answer the arguments presented going to show that those of the New Testament are genuine.

You respond to such arguments substantially as follows:—Miracles are contrary to Nature and impossible. It is necessary to give up miracles or reason. The miracles of the New Testament are lies. I submit that this is bare-faced begging of the question.

Instead of meeting my arguments squarely, according to acknowledged rules of sound reasoning, you set up a theory of your own invention, so framed as to meet the necessities of your case. You undertake to say what deeds should have been performed by Jesus while on earth, in proof of his mission, and what his followers should now do to make good their pretensions.

What Jesus should have done, you put substantially as follows:—This “Jesus God,” as you call him, having created a universe out of nothing in six days, should have given such evidence as would leave no room to doubt his divine mission; yet, while thirty-three years on earth, he did so little that none of the historians of Egypt, Persia, Greece, or Rome seem to have known he was here. He should have built a railroad from Jerusalem to China in a day; built a good locomotive in ten minutes; cut a three-mile mountain tunnel in an hour; made a fertile garden of the Arabian desert in another hour; built a balloon in ten minutes and traveled in it all over the world and preached his gospel to each people in their own language, etc. But instead, he went to work at the carpenter’s trade, let the devil get ahead of him, and finally left the important work he undertook to a lazy priesthood.

What the followers of Jesus at the present day should do, but fail to accomplish, you set forth on this wise:—They should work miracles. If these were possible once, they are possible now. They should demonstrate the efficacy of prayer. Why do praying Christians insure their houses against fire? Why do they cultivate the soil? Because prayer will not put out fire, nor raise corn, nor bring down manna. If prayers could be utilized and made available, there would be no starvation, no poverty, no ignorance, no crime, no jails, no penitentiaries, no war, and no hell; and we should all be living in heaven now. They can pray like Pharisees, but cannot prove themselves Christians.

It seems a question whether what you so present should be regarded as caricature, or as expressing what you believe is reasonable, or as partaking of both of these characteristics. If not mere caricature, these representations are entitled to some consideration; and disposed to so regard them, I will offer a few suggestions in addition to what I have already said covering more or less the same ground.

It must be admitted that some Christians, as well as some infidels, have said some quite foolish things about prayer, and

what it can or cannot do; but others are not bound thereby, and surely the Bible is not to be discredited on that account.

Because some remarkable things are said to have taken place in response to the prayers of certain ancient saints, it is not to be inferred that prayer is always to be so answered. It is not said, nor intimated, that such shall be the case; and such answers are therefore no criterion by which to test the character of the present professors of Christianity. You urge your own and Professor Tyndall's tests—tests not pertinent to any claim put forth nor any promise made in the Bible—yet fail to notice what I have said of the effect and uses of prayer in general.

You think if Jesus had performed such works as you suggest, he would simply have given the necessary proof of his mission; and that if the Christians of to-day would obtain the answers to prayer you allege they ought to have, they would "thereby convince all skepticism at once and forever."

Now, if Jesus could have performed such works as you suggest, is it not a reasonable supposition that it might not have been wise for him to do so? And so of your suggestion in regard to the prayers of Christians. Do they certainly involve the highest wisdom? You would have ignorance and doubt removed, and faith inspired, and work accomplished, as if by magic—all brought about and done up "at once."

Consider what this involves. With knowledge full and all ends accomplished, nothing would remain to be sought, and naught to be done. Idleness would reign supreme, and existence would be a dead sea. Would such a condition be desirable?

On the principle involved in your suggestion, the six days—long or short—consumed in the creation of the world, was a needless waste of time; and the human family might have all been brought into existence "at once"—full-grown and perfect in knowledge and virtue. But such seems to be the order of things neither in the world of matter, nor in the world of mind. We witness no such sudden creations nor

abrupt changes. Progress and development are the order throughout.

The world at large has come to its present state through untold ages of development. The human race has come up from a small beginning to its present volume and condition. Individuals come up from a point, through infancy and youth, to manhood and womanhood. All the mental and moral strength, and all the knowledge and virtue they ever possess, they attain through slow progress—from zero upward. This is a law of human nature questioned by no one.

Why, now, should Deity override this law in making a special revelation of his will to man? Why should he not proceed in harmony with it? This, indeed, is just what he has done,—first, through the ancient Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, and then through his chosen Son and his apostles. This revelation is received first by one nation, and then through that by other nations. It comes first to small numbers, and then through them to the increasing numbers of succeeding generations.

The subject-matter of revelation is disclosed by degrees. It comes not “at once,” in a flood, but gradually, in an ever-widening, and ever-deepening stream. And then, again, the individuals to whom it comes, and who accept it, apprehend it only by degrees, and in the measure in which they place themselves in accord with its principles and requirements. As it comes to the head and the heart, they must open their eyes to its light and their hearts to its warmth and life. So doing, they see more and more its heavenly beauty, and feel more its transforming and elevating power. As they go from strength to strength, this revelation becomes to them more and more a store-house of “unsearchable riches.”

And strange as it may seem to you, and foolish, even, this is just the process through which the great Teacher and Leader of humanity has passed to qualify him for his mission. Born of a woman, he grew up through infancy and youth to manhood. He was made like unto his brethren. Partaking of flesh and blood that he might be touched with the feeling

of our infirmities, he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. He learned obedience by the things that he suffered; and being made perfect through suffering, and thus fitted to succor the tempted, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. To this process, we are told, he voluntarily submitted, humbling himself to become a servant, in which capacity he was obedient even unto death. "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

In subjecting himself to the process just noticed, Jesus exemplified the great truth that he who becomes a leader of his fellow-men by rendering them the highest service, at the greatest personal sacrifice, becomes also the greatest among men,—a truth which he announced to his disciples in the form of a precept—"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

In this truth, so exemplified, considered as a means of the moral elevation of the race, there is a divine philosophy. It gives scope and direction to the noblest ambition; and in proportion as it prevails as a rule of human conduct, it works deliverance from selfishness, and eliminates from human society the evils which poison its life. It is the great aim of Christianity to bring all men under its sway.

You may say it will take a great while to accomplish the desired result by such process. It will, indeed; and the work is such that miraculous power, in the nature of things, could not bring it about instantaneously, nor at all, even. Process requires time. God has a great deal of time, and is a very patient worker. In his own good time, he will bring about the end. To accomplish this work, Jesus has been given all power in heaven and earth; has been made Lord of all living and dead—and will reign until all are brought into subjection.

. I have heretofore called your attention to what has already been accomplished through this process; to the slow and gradual rise of Christianity, and its spread and prevalence over the most enlightened nations; how, indeed, it has entered into the life and moulded the character of individuals, communities and nations, and made the civilization of the world what it is to-day; and how all this has come about under the leadership of Jesus of Nazareth, who happened—providentially, I doubt not—to be born in a stable and cradled in a manger.

And now, in view of the progress already made in this great work, and the promise such progress gives as to the future, what avails the contempt you so freely pour out on this Son of Mary, because of his low origin, and on his mother, because of her poverty, neglect, and degradation? I leave you to answer.

For myself, in the firm belief that a blessed and glorious future awaits humanity, through the mission of the Son of Man, I am happy, on this anniversary of his nativity, to subscribe myself,

Your friend and well-wisher,

Dec. 25, 1878.

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LETTER XVIII

The Virgin Mary—Bible Contradictions—How They Are Made Out, and How Little They Amount to—A Delicate Task.

FRIEND G.:—You return with reënforcements, to your attack on the character of the mother of Jesus, and the record we have of his paternity. I supposed I had made it plain that the horror you expressed at the example of Mary, and the pernicious effect this example must have, if believed, was applicable not to the record, but to your own insinuations in regard to it. I think any other one could have seen this, but you seem to be blind to it.

You suggest that "Joseph Panthera," or some one else, must have interfered with the marital relations of Joseph and Mary. In your communication of Sept. 24, 1877, after alluding to what I had said in reply to you, you add:—"But as I said before, if people generally believed that silly nonsense, then a great many women would want to be Virgin Marys."

You are aware that "people generally," who credit the Bible at all, do believe in this record as we have it; and you confess you "have no serious apprehensions" on the subject. It seems to me, then, you may as well confess the "silly nonsense" your own invention.

You allege, as evidence that the Bible is not to be credited, that it abounds in contradictions. In proof of this, you cite and quote at length, a large number of passages—

mostly in pairs—in the way of contrast. This you do with scarcely a word of argument or comment. You assume that these and other passages contradict each other, and on such assumption claim a verdict against the Bible. An easy way, to be sure, of gaining your point, which you do, of course, only in your own estimation.

I am not disposed to dispute that there are apparent contradictions in the Bible, and some apparent discrepancies, which may call for explanation. I hold, nevertheless, that none of these are of such character as to invalidate the authority of the book. The contradictions are mostly seeming and verbal. Merely to quote such passages in the way of contrast, as evidence of contradiction, is to disregard the acknowledged rules of sound criticism and argument.

After you get through your quotations of this character, you say:—"A hundred more such contradictions might be given." I have little doubt of it. I could add several myself, but will only give one, showing how easily they may be got up, and how little they amount to.

In Prov. xxvi: 4, we have this direction:—"Answer not a fool according to his folly." In the next verse, the direction is reversed. "Answer a fool according to his folly."

Severed from their connections, as above, these precepts are in palpable contradiction. Not so, taken as they stand. They are, nevertheless, counter maxims, one or the other of which is to be followed, as the nature of the case may demand. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, *lest thou also be like unto him.*" "Answer a fool according to his folly, *lest he be wise in his own conceit.*" If the wrong answer is given, two fools have met; if the right one, the "conceit" of a fool has been exposed. Of course there is no conflict here; and the same is true, as I believe, of the passages you quote, though in some cases the seeming disagreement may be greater.

I am constrained, in connection with this passage in Proverbs, to call your attention to a passage in the Psalms, which has often occurred to my mind during the progress of

our friendly discussion; and if in so doing, and in indicating the bearing they have on each other, and on our discussion, I shall seem to use great plainness of speech, I trust you will bear with me, and at the same time remember that I am only following the example you have set me. The passage I refer to is Psalms xiv: 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, *there is no God.*"

When I tell you that I feel compelled to regard these passages as good authority, you will see how delicate a matter it has been, and necessarily must be, on my part, so to conduct our discussion, as to give always the proper answer. I claim not to have done so, but such has been my aim.

From your stand-point, of course, the matter appears in a different light. If there is, indeed, no God, then you, and those who hold with you, are not fools for saying so; but if, on the other hand, there is a God, and such a God as the Bible reveals, you stand where this record places you, however unconscious of the situation you may be.

We are all imperfect, and liable to be mistaken; and I suppose it may be admitted that all men, even the wisest, are fools in some things—some in one thing, and some in another. It should be our special aim, I deem, to gain wisdom in matters of supreme importance, and to always bow to the authority of truth and right. May we both be wise in this sense. Truly yours,

FEB. 1, 1879.

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LETTER XIX.

The Punishment of Idolatry, and the Destruction of Idolatrous Nations—Such Inflictions Compared with Others, Account of which we have Outside of the Bible—The Problem of Evil—The Bible View—The Results Beneficent.

FRIEND G.:—You quote long passages from the Old Testament which you characterize as “immoral, obscene, and murderous.” I will notice first those supposed to be of the “murderous” type. These are chiefly such as relate to the destruction of the idolatrous nations inhabiting Palestine and the surrounding countries. This destruction is represented as in some cases partial, and in others utter—the inhabitants being put to the sword, and their cities burned. You assume that such destruction was without cause, and malignant, and therefore murderous. If this assumption is well-founded, you have an unanswerable argument against so much of the Bible, at least, as justifies such destruction. I deny that it is well-founded; and in support of such denial, and in illustration of the general subject, I call your attention to the following considerations:

1. Consider the vast difference between the doctrine of One Supreme Being—the Jehovah of the Hebrews and God of the Christians—and its opposite, whether taking the form of no God, or of a multitude of imaginary deities represented by idols,—a difference as radical as that between light and darkness. The difference in the practical bearings of these doctrines must necessarily correspond with the difference in their character,—according to the acknowledged truth, that men will imitate the God they believe in.

The recognition of the existence of such Being, and of his supreme authority over all moral intelligences, cannot fail to have a powerful influence. If regarded as good, and merciful, and just, as such he will be obeyed and imitated. On the other hand, a denial or disbelief in the existence of any such Being, is a virtual rejection of moral accountability to any higher power, and opens the door to that state of unbridled license in which men live as they list.

Happily, this tenet of denial and disbelief is so palpable a libel on human nature and the world around, that its effects are somewhat counteracted, especially among cultivated people who live in a better atmosphere; but when it takes full possession of the unlearned, unreasoning, and evil-minded, the reins are dropped upon the neck of passion, and the race of moral degradation becomes furious. Still worse, no doubt, is the practical influence on degraded minds, of a belief in imaginary deities to whom are ascribed all the low passions and vices which degrade humanity.

2. Consider some of the characteristics of the heathen deities, and some of the concomitants of idolatry. History teaches that the fear of misfortunes and the desire of happiness have been the chief sources of idolatry. Unacquainted with natural causes, as we understand them, and having no conception of one Supreme Cause, the masses of the pagan populations of the world have imagined that all the good which came to them, and all the evils which they endured, were attributable to some imaginary being or beings, who had power over the elements around them, and wielded these to bring good or evil to mortals, as they might be disposed.

These divinities have been innumerable, presiding in different spheres, some chief and others subordinate,—separate ones over different nations, tribes, families, and individuals; over the hunter, the warrior, the shepherd, and the husbandman; over mountains, volcanos, oceans, streams and pools of water, and groves; over all existence and all events.

In general, these deities have been supposed to be either male or female, to have intercourse as such with each other,

and even with mortals, and to have like progeny.—legitimate and illegitimate. They are represented as having all the passions which belong to human nature, to which they often gave vent in terrible orgies; as full of jealousy and craft among themselves, resulting, now and then, in terrific combats, in which they tore up mountains and hurled at each other; and though more or less loving and beneficent at times, yet bringing upon mortals who displeased them overwhelming misfortune.

Accordingly, to secure their favor and placate their wrath, gifts, offerings, and sacrifices of various kinds were made to them, and feasts were held in their honor. In cases of extreme peril, to avert disaster and obtain victory, human sacrifices were offered on their altars. Taught as a religious duty to imitate their gods, the worshipers of these deities gave themselves up—especially during their festivals—to revelry, riot, and gross licentiousness. As the gods abandoned themselves to drunkenness and lust, so did their votaries.

To be a little more specific: boys were whipped to death in honor of Diana, and girls to appease Bacchus. Infants and adults were murdered and examined internally to get an insight into futurity. Human sacrifices by burning, drowning, burying alive, or otherwise—were offered to the various reigning deities in Scandinavia, Russia, Rome, Greece, Carthage, Egypt, Phoenicia, Persia, Syria, Moab, Ammon, and doubtless in other oriental countries. Not only slaves, prisoners of war, foreigners, and common citizens, but in extreme cases, nobles, children of the first families, and even senators were so immolated. Kings offered up their own sons, and noble citizens sometimes gave themselves up, to get the help of the gods against the enemies of their country.

And further, as to the immoralities practiced in connection with idolatry:—A law of Babylon required every woman, once in her life, to present herself at the temple of Mylitta or Venus, and receive the embraces of the first stranger who offered himself—at a price which was paid into the treasury of the temple. The Assyrian priests selected the most beauti-

ful women for the use of their god Belus; and the Egyptians did the same for Jupiter. Temples were supported by prostitution. That of Venus, it is said, was so rich that it maintained more than a thousand prostitutes, dedicated to the service of the goddess.

Such was the character of the reigning heathen deities, and such were the practices connected with their worship, prevalent during the period of Hebrew history as recorded in the Bible, and more or less before and after; and the evidence is abundant that such was the type of the idolatry which prevailed among the Hebrews and the surrounding nations, and which was condemned and prohibited by divine authority.

The principal heathen deities known to the Hebrews were Baal, the supreme male divinity of the Phœnicians, and Ashtoreth, their chief female divinity; Molech, the god of the Ammonites; and Chemosh, the god of the Moabites. Baal is supposed to have been substantially one with Bel or Belus, the semi-god of the Babylonians. Ashtoreth was called Ishtar, by the Assyrians, and Astarte by the Greeks and Romans. It is said that the worship of Astarte became identified with that of Venus, and was connected with the same impure rites. Molech and Chemosh were fire-gods, to whom, as well as to Baal, were offered burnt sacrifices.

These were the divinities into whose worship the Hebrews were enticed, on account of which they were severely punished, as were the nations which enticed them, and which they had been commanded to drive out. Reference to passages of the Old Testament which name these deities, or speak of their worship, will show that the idolatrous practices connected with such worship were of the most inhuman and debasing character.

Numb. xxv: 1-18; Deut. xii: 28-31; I. Kings xi: 1-13, xvi: 30-33; II. Kings xvii: 16-18, xxiii: 4-20; Ps. cvi: 28-38; Jer. xix: 1-15; Ez. xvi: 15-59, xxiii: 1-49.

3. Consider the right of Jehovah, as the moral governor of intelligent beings, to make needful laws for their observance. Admitting his existence, you will not question such right.

It follows that he has a right, by efficacious sanction, to prohibit idolatry among a people. This is what he did among the Hebrews.

4. It seems to have been the leading object of the Mosaic Economy, to reclaim a nation from idolatry, and train up a people to the service of Jehovah. Abraham was called from among an idolatrous people. Led into the land of Canaan, he was promised a numerous posterity and this land for their inheritance. His more immediate descendants sojourned for a time in Egypt, where they were held for centuries in bondage, and where they seem to have forgotten the God of their fathers. Moses, as their deliverer, led them to Sinai, where they were commanded to have no other gods before Jehovah. This command was repeated from time to time during their stay in the wilderness, with the penalty of death annexed. Notable instances of its violation, and of the infliction of such penalty, are recorded:—Ex. xx:3, xxii:20; Lev. xx:1-5; Numb. xxv:1-18, xxxi:1-54; Deut. v:7, xii:29-31, xiii:6-17, xvii:2-7.

5. During their passage through the wilderness toward the promised land, then inhabited by idolatrous nations, the Israelites were repeatedly commanded, through Moses, to drive out these nations, for the reason that they were exceedingly corrupt, and if allowed to remain would be to them a perpetual snare, enticing them into idolatry and its cruel and licentious rites and practices. They were also commanded to destroy other nations, of like character, which had entrapped and harrassed them in their journey through the wilderness.

Ex. xxiii:20-33, xxxiv:10-17; Numb. xxxiii:50-56; Deut. vii:1-6, vii:16-26, ix:1-3, xxxi:1-8; Ex. xvii:8-16; Deut. xxv:17-19; I. Sam. xv:1-33; Num. xxv:1-18, xxxi:1-54.

6. If the capital punishment of individuals for idolatry was necessary and justifiable, under the law of Moses, as a means of its suppression among the Hebrews, on the same principle it was justifiable in regard to the surrounding nations,—and especially as these nations were perpetually enticing the Hebrews away from the service of Jehovah

to the service of their idols; and this is just the ground on which such punishment was decreed and inflicted:—"And all Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this among you." "So thou shalt put away evil from among you." "They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee to sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."

7. I am free to admit that the recital of the threatening and execution of such punishments, as we find it in the record, grates harshly on our sensibilities. Concerning any one who should entice others to idolatry, it was decreed,—“And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die.” Concerning any one who should practice idolatrous rites, it was enacted that “he that sacrificeth to any god save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”

For the gross offence of the Israelites at Baal-peor, “the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people and hang them up against the sun”; “and Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.” When the time came, afterward, to punish the Midianites for their connection with this affair, it was commanded that they should all be destroyed, save a portion of the women and the women children.

Concerning the offence of Amalek, the command was, “Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” We are told that Saul, sent by Samuel to execute this command, “utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword,” excepting Agag, the king, whom he brought alive, with certain of the spoil. Samuel reproved him for disobedience in saving the king and the spoil, and thereupon executed the king. “And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.”

In the book of Joshua—chapters vi to xi inclusive—we have account of the taking of the cities and the driving out and destroying of the inhabitants of the land on the west of the Jordan. With some exceptions, this destruction is represented as involving all the people—men, women, and children.

It is useless to deny that such inflictions and visitations as some of these have the appearance of cruelty. They certainly cannot be regarded otherwise than as severe. At the present day, we should not think of justifying a nation going to war against another, in putting the inhabitants of the adverse nation to death indiscriminately. We should be quick to condemn anything of the kind.

This view of the matter presents a real difficulty, which I am not disposed to evade. If I felt obliged to do this, I ought to feel equally obliged to confess your arraignment just, or at least to acknowledge that I cannot answer you. Occupying the standpoint you do, I cannot expect to give an answer that will satisfy you. I may ask you, however, to consider what I have to present as measurably satisfactory to myself.

First. The infliction of suffering, penal or other, cannot be legitimately objected to simply on the ground that it pains our humane feelings. Surgical operations, and the infliction of punishment for the violation of our criminal laws, so affect us; yet we acquiesce in and even insist on these. We deem those culpable who do not. The matter resolves itself in such cases, into a question of necessity,—necessity in order to avoid greater evil, or secure greater good. I see no reason why the same rule should not apply to God's dealings with men.

Second. Precisely what God may do or command, in his government of the nations, is not to be determined by what nations may rightfully do in dealing with each other. True, God has no more right to be cruel or unjust, than nations have; and I admit and claim, that he is under the highest obligation to promote beneficent ends. If, then, the best way to restrain wrong and promote right, in any case, is to take life and blot out a nation, he may rightfully do it. Being infinitely wise, he knows in advance what results must follow. Holding him to be perfectly just and good, we are sure that the outcome must be beneficent. Thus we reason *a priori*. If the results correspond, his ways are vindicated. What have they been in the case in question? Of this, presently.

Third. The necessity for such severe dealing existed in the desperate nature of the malady sought to be cured, and the debased and imbruted character of the people. Only heroic treatment could avail.

Fourth. It was doubtless a mercy to the children to be put to death, rather than to be left without father or mother or others to care for them. In the case of the Midianites, the conquerors were permitted to spare for themselves, the women who had not known man, and the women-children. There were 32,000 of these. More than this number, they could not, doubtless, well care for, in their then unsettled condition; and those of the other nations were destroyed.

Fifth. The punishment and destruction so ordered, involved no protracted suffering. Life was cut short at once: "So shalt thou drive them out and destroy them quickly."

The examples of punishment under consideration, are by no means to be pleaded as a reason, or as an apology, for exceptionally severe punishments for the violation of human laws. It is doubtful whether human governments should take life, excepting in exigencies absolutely demanding it, on the ground of public safety. What is necessary, is such certain punishment as will most effectually restrain from wrong-doing and protect community, and not at the same time foster a feeling of revenge.

8. Here you may remind me, as you have done, that Jehovah is Almighty, and that he could have established his authority over the Hebrews and others, without resorting to such sanguinary measures. True, Jehovah is Almighty. Equally true is it, that these people were human beings. They were not angels. If they had been a higher order of beings, or had been highly cultured and refined human beings, they might have been reached and led by milder means. They had to be taken as they were. The people of Israel had line upon line of precept, admonition, and warning, but these proved insufficient; and it was only after centuries of trial, and terrible ordeals of punishment, that they were finally weaned from idolatry.

9. Consider what has been the result of the process through which the Hebrew and other nations were made to pass, in order to break the spell of idolatry in which they were bound. So far as we know, at the time of the advent of Moses, the reign of idolatry was universal. Through his institutes and the influence of Christianity, the whole civilized world has been redeemed. Nay, civilization has come through these redeeming influences.

Is it nothing that you and I, and our families, and the community and nation in which we live, are not pagans to-day? If required to say why we are not, what would be your answer? And do you know that the very penalties against idolatry which you call "murderous," have not been the means of our salvation?

Idolatry must continue to prevail, or it must be stopped at some time and by some means. Is it not better that some small nations, wholly given to it, should utterly perish, than that it should hold sway through all coming ages, corrupting in their turn all succeeding generations?

10. If it is urged that in such destruction the innocent suffer with the guilty, the answer is, that this is nothing more than happens in other cases of punishment inflicted on offenders against law, whether divine or human. In such cases, the suffering of the innocent is not a punishment on them, personally, but simply an unavoidable providential misfortune.

11. The calamities in question were not more terrible than such as happen to communities and nations outside of any direct command or extraordinary interference on the part of Deity; and they were, moreover, akin to such as nations, through all time, have experienced at each other's hands. With this state of facts, the responsibility for such calamities, aside from the motives which sway individuals and nations, rests in the one case just where it does in the other. The same Almighty Power is dominant.

This is the doctrine of the Bible in regard to Jehovah. He is the Supreme Disposer of human events. He is the

Author of life, and with him are its issues. If it was wrong for him to order the destruction of certain nations, as he did, it is wrong for him to so order events that nations shall war against and destroy each other, as has been the case through all time; and there is no escape from the conclusion that he is a wrong-doer—an unjust God.

The idea that Deity is unjust is so repugnant to the sense of justice instinct in human nature, that those who believe in a God endeavor to avoid this alternative by pointing out, or at least earnestly seeking for, some compensating good to come to those who thus suffer, or to humanity in general, as the result of such ordeals. You seek to escape the difficulty by boldly affirming that there is no God,—none, at least, apart from Nature—with how much reason, or lack of reason, our correspondence will show, in a measure.

12. And here it seems *a propos* to call your attention once more to the manner in which you deal with this problem. Repeatedly pressed to reconcile the calamitous ordeals of Nature with your assumption in its behalf, you utter as a postulate not to be questioned, that Nature is “a spontaneity, a gratuity. It gives everything we find, and requires nothing absolutely,” and cry “Tyrant,” “murderous,” etc. Further than this, in the way of such vindication, you are as dumb as an Egyptian mummy. I do not blame you. I was sure from the first that you could not vindicate Nature without at the same time vindicating the Bible and the God of the Bible.

13. The problem of evil is a dark one at the best, whether viewed from the standpoint of the Bible, or from that of simple Nature, and no finite mind can fully solve it. Why should the whole creation groan and travail in pain as it does? Why should nation war against nation? Why should vast populations be whelmed in flood? Why should hundreds of thousands be scourged with famine, and pestilence, and plague?

Such seems to be the order of nature, past and present. We infer that it could not have been otherwise from the fact that it never has been. We may suppose that Deity might

have made a better world, and peopled it with a better race of beings; but this would be no solution. Our concern is with the world as it *has been* and *is*.

As a specimen of the "ordeals" of Nature, consider what has transpired recently on the continent of Asia. We are told that in a large region of Northern China—comprising a population of from fifty to seventy millions—there has been a failure of crops, from a lack of rain for years in succession, and that these millions have been in a starving condition resulting in cannibalism. What could be worse—in a condition not involving guilt—than dying by inches through a long process of starvation? Some seven millions of these people, it is estimated, have so died. And such fate comes without fault, so far as we know, on the part of those who thus suffer. Compared with it, to perish suddenly in battle, or otherwise, would be a mercy. If you call the punishments inflicted on individuals and nations for idolatry, involving rebellion and treason, "murderous," how should such stupendous calamity be characterized? But, if the latter can be accounted for without arraigning the government of Jehovah, why not the former? Admitting the existence of a Supreme Ruler, you may account for the one as you do for the other. Denying such existence, you are afloat on a sea of darkness, without compass, rudder, or anchor.

14. But the Bible, and especially the New Testament, sheds some light on this subject—on a part of it, at least. Christianity is a remedial system; and while it does not undertake to abolish all moral evil at once, it puts in operation influences which tend continually to lessen its power, and work its eradication. We are assured that creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption; that grace shall abound over sin; that the sufferings of the present are not worthy to be compared to the good to come; and even that the light afflictions of the present, work out for us an eternal weight of glory. If we can credit the record, may we not rest in this assurance?

And in regard to the ordeals of Nature which seem unavoidable, it may be remarked, that the civilization of the future—aided by Christianity—will, not unlikely, develop methods of relief which will check or greatly assuage their disastrous results.

15. To sum up:—Idolatry is a radical evil. As practiced among the Hebrews, and at the same time among the surrounding heathen nations, it was a monstrous iniquity, deserving, in the face of positive prohibition, the severest punishment. Prohibited by Jehovah, to practice, and especially to ordain or encourage it, as was repeatedly done under the Hebrew kings, became treason and rebellion. Its punishment, as decreed and executed, was necessary to stay its progress, and bring it to an end. The execution of this punishment was no more "murderous" than the execution of any judgment by judicial authority. Subsequent events and the present condition of the world, evince the wisdom of the policy pursued, and rebuke your charges of tyranny and murder—as do also the ordeals of Nature,

Cordially yours,

FEB. 15, 1879.

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LETTER XX.

Immorality of the Bible—Passages Cited—The Wicked Acts of Prominent Men and Women—Its Language Vulgar—Unfit to Be Read—The Bible in Schools—Skeptical Method of Interpretation—All True Histories Have Their Dark as Well as Light Shades—Was the Fool, Who Said There is No God, an Idiot?

FRIEND G.:—As evidence that the Bible is not of divine authority, you point to the record it makes of the immoral and wicked acts and lives of some of the more or less prominent characters named in it,—urging not only that the men and women named were graceless and wanton, but that the record itself is indecent and immoral, and unfit to be read. You put down in one category a long list whom you call “God’s favorites,” “heroes of the Bible,” “fine-haired Patriarchs,” and the like. You specially name the following, with lengthy quotations:

Abraham and Sarah, in their intercourse with Abimelech; Noah after the flood; Judah and Shuah; Judah and Onan; Judah and Tamar; Lot and his daughters; Rachel and Bilhah; Shechem and Dinah; Moses commanding the Israelites to slay some of the Midianites and save others for themselves; Joshua destroying Jericho, etc.; Samson and a harlot; Ruth and Boaz; David in his affair with Uriah and Bathsheba; Ammon and Tamar; Absalom and his father’s concubines; Solomon and his wives and concubines, and his description of the prince’s daughter; Ezekiel and his special diet.

Gathering together a large number of passages, of which the above are only a part, you ask me to say whether they are the true word of God; and you seem to think I am obliged to answer, as to the whole mass indiscriminately, either yes or no. I am under no such necessity.

Of course, the untruthful and deceptive sayings of immoral and wicked men and women, account of whose lives is given in the Bible, are not the word of God; and there is no pretense in the record that they are. And the same may be said of other utterances which express simply the thoughts of the parties speaking. The authority of the Bible, as a medium of revelation, is to be found in its doctrines, precepts, commands, and prophetic utterances—announced as coming from Deity.

You not only object to what these men and women said and did, but you object to the book because it contains such narratives. What should a book, purporting to be the medium of a revelation from God to man, contain? Perhaps I should not put the question to you, as you do not believe there is a God—and yet you seem to know what it ought not to contain. It could not be expected to discourse solely of angels, nor of other superhuman or sub-human beings, nor even of man as he is not. Addressed to man, and concerning man, what more natural than that it should speak of him as he is—announcing what he should be and do, and what he should not?

And this seems to be the burden of its message. It lays down the rule of life, points out wherein obedience and disobedience consist, and exemplifies these and their consequences in the lives and characters of the men and women who appear as chief actors on its historic pages. A record so true to human life could not have been made, you think, with the divine approval.

The fact is patent through all history, sacred and profane, that men and women are imperfect,—that the best of them have their weaknesses and faults, and seem sometimes powerless in the presence of strong temptation. True, now and then one appears quite prominent in the sacred record

against whom no accusation is made, but the whole lives of such do not appear; and there is no pretense that they never did wrong. On the other hand, not a few in high places, and whose conduct in general is approved, are accused of great faults, and sometimes of gross wickedness.

And here I call your special attention to the fact that no attempt is made to cover up, or explain away, or put in the background, any of the wickedness, or misdeeds, or shortcomings of such personages, but rather the contrary. They are "set forth for examples" of warning. And this consideration, I take it, is strong evidence, if not of the inspiration, yet of the integrity of the record.

You object, it would seem, to the language of the record in these matters; and your objection is plausible, at least in view of a public taste which has grown up, and which cannot be ignored, whether in all respects well-founded or not. I call your attention, however, to a distinction which should not be overlooked between an act and the language in which it may be described. The latter may be chaste, while the former is offensive. When it becomes necessary to speak of offensive conduct, and it is done in as chaste language as possible, and with pure intent, it is unwarrantable to attribute vulgarity to the speaker, or writer, or record.

Was the language of the passages in question unchaste, in the public estimation, at the time it was written? I have a right to assume, as I do, that it was not. And then, as I have before said, vulgarity is attributable to the animus of an utterance, rather than to its language. I deem the position entirely safe, that no jury of pure minded men or women, or both, can sit down and carefully examine this record, and say that they discover in its intent a trace of such animus. I speak, you will bear in mind, not of the intent of the parties whose offensive acts are narrated, but of the intent of the narrator.

In connection with this subject, you take occasion to criticise the conduct of Christians because they "are so anxious, and even fighting," as you say, to have the Bible

"read to and by their children in the public schools." You say "there is only one excuse for all such Christians, and that is that they are ignorant and know not what is in the Bible."

And pray, what would you have done with this book? If it is unfit to be in our schools, it is unfit to be in our churches, libraries and families. And what is your practice? You will not deny that you have it in your own family, that it is accessible to all the family, and that each member reads it at pleasure. And further, I venture to say you will not claim that any one of them, save yourself, has been demoralized through its influence.

It does not follow that all parts of it should be read aloud in promiscuous assemblies, in schools, and in families. We have statutes and records of courts, somewhat similar in character, also essays and discussions of a kindred nature—very important in their places—which would not be suitable reading in such presence. Most persons whose lot it is to lead in such matters, have a good share of what is known as "common sense;" and such "wisdom is profitable to direct."

And now, how is it with yourself? You will not take it unkindly if I press you closely on this point. What you have written makes this pertinent. Has this record done you damage? I don't know. If the passages in question are really as obnoxious in every view as your representation seems to make them, methinks, after scanning them sufficiently to discover their true character, with your chaste pen in hand, and a simple citation, you should have turned away in disgust. But not so. You brood over and seem to revel in them. You quote at great length, and emphasize, and criticize adversely, what you deem most offensive. Now, if the original record is so unclean that it cannot be read without damage, and ought not to have been made, how could you spread it out anew on clean white paper? Your treatment of the subject is quite a puzzle to me.

You say you "accept the Bible script, like any other book, in its literal sense," and "don't accept any interpretation;" and that if others are at liberty to interpret, so are you.

I suppose you will admit that all languages abound in metaphor and allegory—sometimes highly wrought—and yet you seem to ignore this fact. “Like any other book,” this is true of the language of the Bible. To admit this, and yet insist on taking it throughout “in its literal sense,” is not allowable. Interpretation, then, is legitimate—even necessary. In this you claim a right to take a hand. Very well. But you cannot interpret arbitrarily without being yourself obnoxious to criticism. You must observe obviously just rules. Taking into account everything bearing on the subject, you must get the scope, purpose, and spirit of the record,—making it consistent throughout, if possible. Have you done this? Have you aimed to do it? Let me call your attention to some examples.

In your attempt to show that the Bible contradicts itself, you ignore all such just rules,—simply quoting a number of passages side by side, assuming that they are contradictory.

You endeavor by your own interpolations—rather inferences—to fix on the Bible the brand of obscenity, and represent it as encouraging or countenancing immoral practices—instances of which I proceed to note:

Without anything to justify it, you infer what, if true, would make Mary, the mother of Jesus, a type of unchaste womanhood. In like manner, you infer improper conduct on the part of Ruth and Boaz.

You draw a like inference in the case of Samson and the “harlot” of Gaza. In this, you may possibly be right, but your inference is weakened by the fact that this woman was probably an “inn-keeper,” as was also Rahab, of Jericho.

From the command of Moses to the Israelites, to “keep alive” for themselves some of the women and the women-children of the Midianites, you infer that they were authorized to hold them for unworthy purposes. You infer this, notwithstanding such use was unlawful. Your inference is, moreover, singularly incongruous and out of character, in view of the circumstances under which the injunction was given. The Midianites had enticed the Israelites into idolatry, and into their lascivious practices. As a punishment for this, they

were to be destroyed, excepting certain females. These females, according to your inference, were to be spared and kept by the Israelites, that the wickedness for which the punishment was inflicted might be continued!

In the affair of David with Bathsheba and Uriah, which you mention in connection with his treatment of the captive Ammonites, you infer that David acted the part of "a man after God's own heart," and exclaim, "Now, what should we think of this God?" This you do, right in the face of the record showing the most pointed condemnation, and the severest punishment of David, for his atrocious wickedness in his treatment of Uriah and his wife.

He may, or he may not, have acted wickedly in his treatment of the captives in question. It is likely that this was in accordance with the usages of war at the time. They are represented as having been put under "saws," and "harrows," and "axes," and made to "pass through the brick-kiln." Some are of the opinion that the meaning is that they were subjected to servitude in the use of the implements named; and the mention of passing through the brick-kiln would seem to favor this view. However this may be, there appears to be no warrant for your inference. A general expression of approval cannot be made to cover what is expressly disapproved, or is of doubtful character.

You infer lascivious thought on the part of Solomon in his description of the prince's daughter. You think you are justified in this by what is said of him as having many wives and concubines. This I doubt.

Solomon, like many other conspicuous men, had his weaknesses and erred grievously, especially in the latter part of his life. According to the record, during the early part of his life and reign he was a virtuous and wise man and king. His other writings support this idea. His practice of polygamy and concubinage was not exceptional among his own people, and tallied with that in vogue among the surrounding nations. While such practice was not authorized by the Mosaic law, it does not seem to have been specifically prohibited. It was

not counted a violation of the marital and other social relations, and for the time was simply tolerated. In intermarrying with idolaters, Solomon violated an express command. In his old age his wives led him into idolatry, and as a punishment therefor his kingdom was rent from him.

The language in question is poetical—part of a song—and should be interpreted in that view. I profess not to divine its intent. It may have, with the rest of the poem, a spiritual significance, as some suppose. Not unlikely it combines the æsthetic and the spiritual; and in this view, it would seem to be out of the reach of unfavorable criticism in the line of your inference.

Comeliness of form in the highest type of animal being would seem to be an appropriate symbol of mental and moral beauty. The interpretation you suggest should be avoided, if possible. I think you could avoid it, if you could once get out of the ruts of infidelity in which you seem fated to put the most unfavorable construction on everything the Bible contains, by virtue of which, as you suppose, you can gain a weapon against it. For a moment, if possible, lift yourself out of these ruts, and look upon the passage in question in the light of simple nature—always pure—remembering that “to the pure all things are pure,” and see what you can make of it.

The special diet prescribed for Ezekiel you treat, according to your method, as having no significance aside from the character of common food, which you ascribe to it—talking of “the kitchen of old.” You seem to count its evident intent, though indicated in what you quote, and in the context, as of no account—otherwise wholly ignoring what is said on the subject.

The directions given to Ezekiel, literally carried out, required him to go through a number of dramatic performances—one of which is described in the passage in question—typifying the degradation and doom to which Israel and Judah had long been tending, which had been in part realized, and which were soon to come on them in their full measure,—

involving the destruction of their temple and chief city, and their removal into captivity.

These awful visitations had been predicted by Moses centuries before, as you may see by reference to the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. If obedient in all things, these people were to be blessed in all manner of ways; but if disobedient, all manner of curses were to come upon them. Their plagues should be wonderful—even great plagues and of long continuance. All the diseases of Egypt, which they feared, should cleave to them. They should be smitten before their enemies, besieged, conquered, carried into captivity, and subjected to the utmost degradation and destitution. They should eat the fruit of their bodies—the flesh of their sons and their daughters. The man who was tender, and the woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, should do this.

The siege of Samaria, as described in Second Kings, witnessed the truth of this prediction. During its progress “an ass’ head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove’s dung”—probably a kind of seed—“for five pieces of silver.” Then a woman of the city came to the king with a complaint against another woman, saying, “This woman said unto me, Give thy son that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son and did eat him; and I said unto her the next day, Give thy son that we may eat him, and she hath hid her son.” And the like of this transpired with the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, when their city and temple were destroyed, and they were taken into captivity, as Jeremiah relates in his Lamentations:—“They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills.” “The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

You cannot fail, methinks, to see how appropriate was the performance Ezekiel was directed to go through, to represent

what actually came upon his people—how well the type fits the antitype.

But have you not committed an egregious blunder, in your reference to this matter? You speak of the animal excrement mentioned in the passage as composing a part of the food on which Ezekiel was to subsist—"as the thing to cook, and bake, and diet on." There is no justification for this. The component articles are specified as "wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches." These were to be made into bread or cakes, and baked. This food was to be eaten daily by weight, with water drank by measure—each in small quantity, denoting great scarcity. The excrement was to be used simply as fuel with which to bake the cakes. You very likely remember using "buffalo chips," in like manner, many years ago, in crossing the plains to California. No doubt this exhibition, "in their sight," was intended to make the people disgusted with themselves on account of their degeneracy. "Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."

In this connection I will say a word in response to the closing sentence of a note I received from you a few days since. It is as follows:—"My friend:—You would not take \$10.00 and read some chapters of the Bible to an audience of ladies and gentlemen."

You doubtless supposed it would embarrass me to answer this, either pro or con. Not at all. You mention only a certain pecuniary consideration. Neither that, not that multiplied by thousands, would tempt me to go through such a performance; nor can I think of any other consideration that would. Keeping in mind my reasons for it, you can have the benefit of this concession.

The *facts* narrated in some of the passages to which you refer, are confessedly of odious and repulsive character, aside from the *language* used. This, in the absence of any impelling necessity, would lead every intelligent and virtuous person to rebel against such an exhibition—a good criterion.

Such being the case, why, you may ask, should these passages occupy the place they do? Why, I ask, should any history be true? Why should it not reveal the characters of its chief actors in their true light? A pretended history of any people having no dark pages, would be false and misleading. The passages in question are part of the warp and woof of the history of the most remarkable nation the world has ever known, as the facts transpired. As all history should, they reveal human nature, and the condition of society among that people, as they then were.

The dark shades, as well as the light, have their moral, but should be kept in the background. To strike out such passages would leave blanks in the record, and break the historic chain. It is one thing to have them where they are, for instructive reference, and quite another to parade them offensively before the public.

As another example of the manner in which you interpret scripture language, I take the following from your note just referred to:—"Your quotation from the Bible, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' is simply not true—because the *fool* is not capable of saying anything on the subject."

If you were taken unawares, you would doubtless readily admit—what the dictionaries tell us—that the word "fool," like many others, has more than one meaning—that it does not always mean *idiot*. I have no doubt you have often heard others say, and have yourself said, "What a fool I was," or its equivalent. You did not mean to say you were an idiot.

But in order to get rid of the force of a passage of scripture, you are obliged to assume that it is "untrue," or that its language has a meaning which would make it obnoxious or nonsensical, though some other meaning is possible, if not obvious. You seem somehow doomed to this course. So it appears to me *à propos* to paraphrase and return to you a sentence of yours which comes in close connection with what I have quoted above:—"But this is just the way the Bible

[infidelity] carries men out of their reason and blears their perception with a cloud of superstition [mental fog]. (Nothing personal). Very truly yours,

MARCH 7, 1879.

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LETTER XXI

Christianity Teaches a Morality that Nobody Preaches or Practices—Care of Earthly Treasures—Non-resistance—Subordination of Women—Power of Faith and Prayer—The Christian Unfitted for the Ordinary Business of Life.

FRIEND G.:—In your communication of September 24, 1877, you attempt to show that there are no Bible Christians at the present day. You introduce a long quotation from "an eminent living author," as you call him, who endeavors to make out that "Christianity teaches a morality which nobody preaches or practices." This is done by an ingenious interweaving of numerous passages of scripture so as to show a plausible case. This plausible showing is made by quietly assuming that the language used is to be understood in an absolute and literal sense,—entirely ignoring the obvious fact that the Bible, like other books, abounds in passages and expressions that can be so interpreted only in violation of acknowledged rules of criticism and interpretation.

Because the Savior said, Take no thought for the morrow; lay not up treasures upon earth; sell that thou hast and give to the poor; because his immediate followers were poor, and he himself had not where to lay his head, it is argued that the true disciple of Christ—if such an one there is—trusting that his heavenly Father will feed him as he does the fowls, and as he did his people in the wilderness, cries, "Away with work," resolves to remain poor, and is contented to sing:

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in the wilderness;

A poor, way-faring man,
I lodge awhile in tents below,
Or gladly wander to and fro,
Till I my Canaan find."

It is true that when a certain young man came to Jesus inquiring how he might become his disciple, the Savior said to him, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me;" it is true that others forsook all in becoming his disciples; it is true that after the day of Pentecost, the disciples at Jerusalem, under peculiar circumstances, voluntarily surrendered their worldly possessions for distribution among their brethren; but it is not true that these precepts and examples, fairly interpreted, teach that entire disregard of material interests which is claimed—and claimed, I apprehend, simply to discredit Christianity. They were not so understood by the apostles, who urged the disciples to be diligent in business; who said if a man would not work, neither should he eat; and that he who fails to provide for his own household is worse than an infidel.

But these precepts and examples have, notwithstanding, a deep significance,—a significance of which many who profess Christianity, it is to be feared, have but a vague conception. Involving the principle which should be the guide of human conduct, they are of supreme importance.

Jesus comes to man as the representative of his Father, and our Father, to whom we are indebted for all that we are and all that we have,—rightfully claiming supreme authority over us, and implicit obedience on our part. The injunction is, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,*"—make right, truth, duty, the supreme rule of your lives. Do this, and all shall be well.

The injunction leaves no room for divided allegiance. We cannot, indeed, serve God and Mammon. The rule simply requires that a man shall hold himself as steward of all the gifts and goods he possesses, to be used to promote the highest human good. It does not require the surrender into other hands of earthly possessions rightfully obtained; it does

prohibit their acquisition by inequitable means; it does require their restitution when wrongfully obtained.

And here I am obliged to confess that, judged by this rule, perfect Christians are few and far between; or rather, that all come short of perfect obedience. If we are obliged to say that such short-coming seems inevitable, in a greater or less degree, still the rule cannot be relaxed. There must be an honest and earnest effort to comply, or there can be no true discipleship.

In view of the rule, what shall be said of those who put on the garb and adopt the language of discipleship, and yet daily bow down to Mammon in a headlong strife for riches, as though their possession were the chief end of man? They may be left, at the least, to the rebuke of honest infidels.

Because it is said in the Bible that the powers that be are ordained of God; that he who resists shall receive damnation; submit to every ordinance of man; resist no evil, etc.; and because Jesus himself went to the extreme of yielding his own life without resistance, it is urged that any resistance to wrong is anti-Christian, under whatever circumstances.

It must be admitted, that apart from every other consideration, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion so reached. The precepts and example cited seem to insist on the greatest possible forbearance, even in the utmost extremity. A current proverb says, "There is a point at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue." In his own case, Jesus never found this point. Can his disciples find it for themselves? Without undertaking to give a positive answer to this question, I will indicate some considerations that should not be overlooked in the general view.

Jesus recognized the necessity of human government. He paid taxes, and said, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Paul declared that the powers that be are ordained of God. Governments cannot be sustained without the maintenance of penal laws and the resistance of wrong. If the injunction, Resist not evil, is to be understood in its absolute sense, it must apply to governments as well as to individuals,

and must forbid that the robber, burglar, murderer and other criminals shall be resisted or restrained; must forbid the establishment of jails and penitentiaries; must forbid even the existence of government.

Whatever else may be true in this matter, there can be no doubt of the fact that there is great lack of Christian forbearance in the world, both among individuals and nations; that it is safe—a duty, indeed—to cultivate this virtue in a much higher degree; and that as humanity approaches nearer and nearer the spirit and example of the great Teacher and Leader, the world will become more and more an Eden of abode. It is the great aim of Christianity to make it such.

The writer you quote has a long passage touching woman, marriage, divorce, etc., complaining that the Bible treats woman as inferior and subordinate to man. I do not deem it worth while to follow him in all the details he specifies. I have no doubt that much we find in the Bible on this subject is to be placed to the account of the manners and customs and the peculiar circumstances existing at the time.

Whether woman is naturally inferior to man, is a question of fact. Man is superior in physical strength; that he is in mental power, is not so clear; in the moral and religious element, and in sentiment, woman is doubtless superior. In the whole, they are counterparts. Each is the complement of the other. As parts of a unit, the sphere of each is a *hemi*-sphere. They were never intended to be placed in antagonism. Left free, and unbiased by false education, each will find its proper place, and neither will pit itself against the other, or quarrel about their respective rights.

To this general view, there may seem to be individual exceptions. We now and then witness some women who exhibit strong masculine traits of character, and some men of no less feminine type. These will, of course, exhibit some eccentricities, but not sufficient to disturb the general balance.

Further on this subject, I care only to call your attention to the fact—notorious to all familiar with the history of the

past—that in proportion as the Bible and Christianity have prevailed among the nations, has the condition of woman improved,—rising from that of a slave to man, to be his companion and equal.

Your author has also a lengthy passage on the power of faith and prayer, as a miraculous means of acquiring blessings and warding off evils. I have already said so much on this subject that remains unanswered, that more seems unnecessary.

Your quotation winds up with a passage in which the writer represents the Christian—as he finds him described in the Bible—as utterly unfitted, in view of the doom which he sees impending over the race, for attending to ordinary business, and as opposed to such improvement in material affairs as will make this world a more desirable abode. He runs on after the following fashion :

The Christian is sternly opposed to what is called human improvement. If he sees his neighbor's residence adorned with walks, trees, flowers, statuary, fountains, paintings, etc., he views all this with regret, as evidence that his neighbor loves the world, and is neglecting to think of God and the devil, and heaven and hell, and of his immortal interests. He believes that nearly all mankind will be finally lost. "Many" go the broad way to destruction, while but "few" find the narrow way to life. He implores God to touch the hearts of men so as to take them from earth to heaven,—from railroads, steamships, banks, and other worldly things and pursuits, to the world of spirits and the fate of undying souls.

Of course, his own worldly affairs are neglected. He thinks of his dear relatives and friends who have died, and anxiously asks, Where are they? With God and the holy angels? or with demons, where no voice of love or sound of hope can reach them? He would not be human if he did not mourn night and day. On the street, in the market, in the palaces of the rich, and in the huts of the poor, he mourns the fate of his race. He never laughs. Woe unto you that laugh

now. Blessed are they that mourn. So he reads, and so he feels.

I am obliged to confess that I have been acquainted with no Christians who seemed to fill the above description, or to come very near it, unless in the case of now and then one on the verge of insanity, or actually over it. I confess, too, that the description is plausible in view of the language quoted in connection, and the interpretation which has been given to such language; and I think it deserves the serious consideration of those who accept such interpretation, whether the description is overdone; and if not, why they come so far short of bringing themselves within it. As I shall have something to say in another communication bearing on this point, I pass it for the present. Very truly yours,

JULY 16, 1879

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LETTER XXII.

Senseless Tales of the Bible—Adam and Eve—Cain and Abel—The Deluge and Ark—The Exploits of Joshua, Shamgar, and Samson—Elisha and the Bears and Children—The Story of Jonah—Blunders—God's Dealings with Man.

FRIEND G.:—You give me a short passage from "Dr. Hamlin, of California," in which he characterizes as "senseless tales" the accounts we have in the Bible of Adam and Eve—"a couple of bipeds"—in Eden; of Cain and Abel; of the Deluge and Ark; of the exploits of Joshua in taking Jericho, and stopping the sun and moon; of the exploits of Shenger with his ox-goad; of the exploits of Samson with the gates of Gaza, and with his 300 foxes; of Elijah and the bears and children; of Jonah and his whale and gourd; and of "a host of other nonsense," not named.

The objection to these accounts, on its face, is that they are "senseless." Why senseless, we are left to guess; and I suppose it to be on the broad ground that Deity never interferes with man in any unusual way,—never thus communicates his will to him, and never, by extraordinary means, gives him aid or interferes with his operations. There may be the further ground, in the mind of the writer, that the things so represented as being done, and which could not have transpired without superhuman aid, were unworthy of such interference on the part of Deity.

As to whether Deity has ever so interfered, I do not deem it necessary to say more than I have. As to what may

be senseless, because unworthy of the notice of Deity, perhaps Dr. Hamlin may not be a competent judge.

I have but a faint idea that I can say anything touching the matters in question that would be satisfactory to Dr. Hamlin, or will meet your views, yet I will venture a few words.

I have heretofore spoken of the garden of Eden in connection with the account we have of the creation in Genesis. I now further say that I think it no objection to Adam and Eve that they were "bipeds." I think, too, that having taken the forbidden fruit, they did the most natural thing imaginable in attempting to hide themselves in the garden. Their descendants at the present day act much in the same way. Conscience-stricken, they seek to hide their acts, and sometimes themselves, even, from human eyes.

I see nothing unreasonable in the statement that Adam and Eve had two sons, named respectively Cain and Abel; nothing incredible—in view of the subsequent history of the race—in the murder of Abel by Cain; and nothing to object to in the sentence which condemned this fratricide to go forth "a fugitive and a vagabond."

I see no reason to doubt that there was such a Deluge as represented,—rather the contrary, on the testimony of geology and of ancient traditions and records. And so of the Ark in which Noah and his family are said to have been saved.

Most certainly, Joshua did not "*blow* down the walls of Jericho with a ram's horn." Nevertheless, his men blew their horns and shouted, and the walls fell. A higher power must have intervened, unless something remains untold.

I doubt whether Joshua stopped the sun and moon in their course, or caused the earth to cease revolving. The passage making this statement is supposed to be an interpolation, taken from a poem called "the book of Jasher," named in the connection.

Shamgar (not Shenger, as in your quotation) slew 600 Philistines with an ox-goad. I suppose Dr. Hamlin's idea is, that he did this *alone*, with *one* ox-goad. If you will observe

the connection, you will see that Shamgar was one of the judges of Israel. As such, he was at the head of their armies. They had a weapon called an ox-goad. Heading his men, armed with this weapon, he "delivered Israel." He did not do it alone any more than General Grant put down the Rebellion alone.

Samson must have had superhuman aid, it would seem, in carrying off the gates of Gaza, as in some other exploits. No such aid was needed in the management of the foxes he sent into the corn fields of the Philistines. The animals called "foxes" are said to have been jackalls, to have abounded in the country, and to have been easily taken.

While Samson was judge of Israel, the nation was subject to the Philistines, and there was antagonism between them. In retaliation for a wrong done by the Philistines, he caught 300 of these animals, and sent them, with fire-brands attached, into the corn fields of the Philistines. The point made by Dr. Hamlin seems to be, that there were, as he says, "300 foxes' tails tied to one brand!!" On the contrary, it is expressly said that he "put a fire-brand in the midst between *two* tails."

It does not follow, of course, that Samson alone caught all these animals and sent them into the fields, any more than that Shamgar alone slew 600 Philistines. It was, no doubt, done by those under him. The animals being caught and held at different points along the Philistine border, and adjacent to the corn fields, were, at a given point of time, all let loose. The tails of the different couples were likely left far enough apart to allow a fire-brand (rather, torch) to be fastened between them, so as not to seriously burn, but rather, annoy and frighten them, and cause them to pull this way and that, and endeavor to escape. The torches were, no doubt, contrived to burn for some time. As the animals ran hither and thither in the corn fields, the grain would soon be in a general blaze. As a device for weakening an enemy, this was ingenious and effective.

After the ascension of the prophet Elijah, Elisha became his successor. With him, and not with Elijah (as Dr. Hamman has it), is connected the story of the two bears and the children.

As the prophet was going to Bethel, there came out of the city a company of little children and mocked him. He raged and cursed them, and presently, as would seem, "there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tear forty-and-ten children of them."

There would seem to be nothing naturally impossible in this story. It is discredited, I suppose, on account of its unusual and sanguinary character,—sanguinary, I say, on the supposition that these children were killed, though it is not said that any of them were.

Admitting the truth of the story, it may be wrought into a serious moral puzzle, as follows:—Were the bears at hand at the time by providential arrangement? or was their presence a mere coincidence? Was their descent upon the children a punishment for the offence of the latter? Did the children commit this offence of their own motion? or were they influenced to it by their parents? If the latter, why was the visitation upon the children only? Were these little ones more wicked than many other children who are not so visited? If not, why were they so harshly treated?

If we are unable to satisfactorily solve these questions, are we therefore justified in rejecting the story as a fiction? These problems now and then present themselves, which equally puzzle us. When a school-house or a church is filled with children, why should a whirlwind come along and bury the little ones beneath its ruins? If it could be shown that the children were engaged in some wickedness at the time, would that account for the whirlwind? Would it be any better accounted for by excluding all idea of blame on their part? Yet we cannot deny that such occurrences take place.

If, then, we feel compelled to admit the truth of the story, and at the same time to place it in the category of unsolvable enigmas, do we do more than modestly confess our

lack of wisdom? Why may we not find some enigmas in the Bible as well as out of it?

But, from a certain standpoint, it may not be so much of an enigma, after all. Unless we are prepared to discard a great portion of the Bible record, we must admit that there have been a great many instances of remarkable providential interference in human affairs. Indeed, without such interference, we could have had no such Bible as we now have.

Elisha was a true prophet, just entered upon his mission as the successor of Elijah. Elijah, on account of his faithfulness in rebuking the idolatries and wickedness of Israel under Ahab, had incurred their bitter enmity. This enmity was naturally transferred to Elisha, and now found vent in the contemptuous out-cry of their children—"Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head." Elisha turned and cursed the children in the name of the Lord, and then came the bears upon them.

Elisha, as a prophet of the Lord, was his representative, and as such was entitled to respect and obedience. The mockery was not only an expression of contempt for Elisha, but an insult to Jehovah. The parents, whose spirit and manners the children had caught, were more to blame than their children, and what happened was no doubt a severer visitation to them than to their children.

With the basest ingratitude, these Israelites had forsaken Jehovah and gone after Baal. They needed some overpowering demonstration which should reveal to themselves their own wickedness, and call them back to their allegiance; and it came in this sudden, strange, and calamitous manner. Although it involved retribution, this was not all it meant. It was a voice saying to them, JEHOVAH is the God of Israel, and *Elisha* is his Prophet.

The story of Jonah is a standing rock of offence to the skeptic, and more or less a puzzle to the theologian.

Though a true prophet, Jonah had his weaknesses, and a sad experience. He was commanded to go to the great city of Nineveh, and testify against its wickedness. This was a dis-

agreeable duty, from which he shrank and fled the other way. Taking ship at Joppa for Tarshish, he suffered shipwreck. After great tribulation, he found himself again on dry land. Word came to him a second time, "Arise, go into Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." He obeyed, and proclaimed that in forty days Nineveh should be overthrown. The king and people repented, and the calamity was averted.

Jonah was displeased at this, and said he knew, before he left his own country, that the Lord was merciful and would repent him of the evil. Mortified to death and despondent, he went out on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat in the shadow of it, awaiting what might follow. A gourd grew up suddenly and afforded him additional protection, for which he was glad, but it was soon destroyed. Exposed to a vehement east wind, he fainted and prayed God to take his life. The answer was, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, and should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and also much cattle?"

In defending this part of the Bible, it does not seem to me necessary to insist that this story is to be taken literally in all its parts. The leading facts seem to be these:—There was such a city as Nineveh. It was very wicked. Jonah was commanded to go and preach to it. He disobeyed. After correction and a second command, he obeyed. The people repented, and the city was spared from overthrow.

Though it is impossible to draw the line precisely between what is literal and what is not, it seems quite certain that metaphor prevails to a large extent. I know of no reason why that part of the story which relates to the *manner* of Jonah's shipwreck and deliverance, and to the growth and destruction of the gourd, should not be regarded as allegorical. It would not be necessary, in such case, to solve the problem whether the whale could have swallowed Jonah; and whether, having done so, it could have delivered him alive on dry land,

after carrying him through the deep waters three days and nights.

Such interpretation would seem, moreover, to leave room to suppose that Jonah must have had a more favorable place for meditation, and for such an offering of prayer and thanksgiving, as is attributed to him, than he could have had in the stomach of a literal whale. And yet, if we are obliged to accept the account as literal, in this particular, we cannot doubt the power of Jehovah in the premises.

One thing is clear. The moral of the story stands out conspicuously: The Lord is gracious and merciful, and will save from utter destruction a repentant city and people.

A word seems proper here touching Dr. Hamlin's attack on the Bible, as you have presented it. He appears as a rather careless reader of its contents. He puts Shenger for Shagar, Elijah for Elisha, and one fire-brand to all the tails of Samson's 300 foxes, instead of one fire-brand to two tails. When he undertakes to make a passage of scripture a butt of ridicule, he should be careful, if he would save his own credit, not to blunder in such manner. How that "host of other nonsense" which he thinks he sees in the Bible, would appear, reproduced under his hand, we can only imagine.

In closing your long communication of Sept. 24, 1877, you ask a series of questions touching the character of the God of the Bible, as a being infinitely and immutably good, and wise, and powerful,—implying that his dealings with man and his requirements of him are inconsistent with such character. I admit that a number of these questions have great force, if what you assume to be the teaching of the Bible is true—which I do not admit.

God is, indeed, infinitely good; and being perfect in all his attributes, he is at the same time infinitely above being benefited by any service man can render him, or injured or influenced by anything man can do. This does not imply indifference on his part. The contrary is rather true. Having created man out of the fulness of his beneficence, he demands of him nothing that is not for his own good. The offerings

and worship, and service, required at his hands, are only such as befit his condition of dependence—only such as properly express his gratitude for benefits received—only such as will best promote his progress in virtue and happiness.

God has seen fit, in his wisdom, to create man just as he is,—an imperfect being, yet capable of good and evil, with power to choose between them; endowed with a moral sense, and responsible for his conduct; perfectly helpless and ignorant in the first stages of his existence, yet capable of indefinite progress in knowledge and virtue, his very nature and surroundings subject him to evil; but the ordeals through which he must pass, and which bring to him more or less suffering, are among the agencies which aid his progress, and enable him to rise to the dignity of a noble manhood—the highest good he can attain.

That such is the teaching of the Bible, properly understood, I firmly believe. What I have already written has, I trust, tended to make this appear—as will also what I have yet to say. Yours, as ever,

JULY, 19, 1879.

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LETTER XXIII.

Nature and Man in the Future World—The Tenet of Bodily Torment in a Realm of Fire after Death, of Heathen Origin—Its Acceptance by the Church in the Dark Ages—Quotations from Authors—Is it a Doctrine of the Bible?—Reasons Why it has held its Place to the Present Day—Sin will be Punished.

FRIEND G.:—Your note of December 26, 1878, I quote in full, excepting a few of the first and last words, as follows:

“You seem in earnest to hold that Nature requires as much, or even more of us than does your Bible God; but give no demonstration of things to make the fact applicable to our future life, if there be any. You have evaded this point every time, and, of course, I suppose, you will again. I have stated over and over that your Bible God is a tyrant, because he metes out eternal punishment for mere opinion’s sake; because his inspired word says that he that believes not shall be damned—go to eternal punishment—a hell of fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not—and a great deal more such *inhuman, barbarian nonsense*. Now, be candid, and please tell me what Nature requires of us that subjects us to such a penalty, after this life is over.”

Whether Nature requires anything of us, or subjects us to any penalty, “after this life is over,” or not, I profess not to know. I am willing to grant, so far as the question between us is concerned, that it has nothing to do with us in “our future life, if there be any.” As this point has not before been raised between us, I have not, of course, evaded it.

You once before accused the Bible of threatening punishment for “mere opinion’s sake,” citing a passage in which the

language you now use occurs. This I answered, and to my answer you made no response.

You have also, perhaps, at different times, made extravagant representations in regard to God's dealings with men in the future, assuming, without argument, that the Bible bears you out in this. Denying this, I have urged considerations, in a general way, showing your assumption unfounded. Now, in response to your note, I will speak somewhat more fully on the subject.

And here I am obliged to confess, as I have before done, that your objections to the Bible, on this ground, derive force from the interpretation which, in former years, many have given, and some still give, to certain passages of scripture, supposed to relate to the future world. What are these passages, and what are such interpretations?

The passages are such, for the most part, as speak of destruction or punishment through the agency or under the figure of *fire*, in which occur such expressions as "flaming fire," "everlasting fire," "eternal fire," "hell fire," "fire and brimstone," "lake of fire and brimstone," "furnace of fire," "unquenchable fire," etc.

These passages have not only been understood to relate to the future world, but have been interpreted to teach that the wicked, whose punishment they declare, are to be tormented, after this life, in a furnace, a hell, or a lake of *literal fire*; and theologians and poets who have taken this view have undertaken to describe in detail the sufferings they must endure. They are represented as being confined in this place of torment *bodily*, as being subjected to every conceivable mode of torture and to the greatest degree of pain that almighty power can inflict.

Skeptics generally take it for granted, I believe, that these interpretations are well-founded. Whether they are or not is a serious question, which every friend of the Bible should ponder well. It were cowardly to shrink from it; to evade it would be uncandid. Let us look it full in the face. To do this we should go for the representations in question to

the highest authorities. I proceed to quote from some of these:

Tertullian says:—"The damned burn eternally without consuming, as the volcanoes, which are vents from the stored subterraneous fire of hell, burn forever without wasting."

St. Cyprian says that "those fires shall live, and the unconsuming flame shall lick the naked body." And again:—"The wretched bodies of the condemned shall simmer and blaze in those living fires."

Rev. Tobias Swinden says "that the fire of hell is not metaphorical, but real."

Dr. Barrow teaches that "in the state of everlasting death our bodies shall be afflicted continually by sulphurous flame—not only scorching the skin, but penetrating the inmost sinews."

Speaking of the rich man in hell, Drexelius says:—"How strangely is his condition altered! Instead of a lofty bed of down, on which he was wont to repose himself, he now lies frying in the flames; his sparkling wine and delicious dainties are taken from him; he is burnt up with thirst, and has nothing for his food but smoke and sulphur!"

Mr. Ambrose represents that the damned shall be packed like brick in a kiln; and while thus fixed, the Almighty shall blow the fire of hell through them forever. Varying the figure, Matthew Henry tells us that "Sinners of the same sort will be bundled together in the great day; a bundle of atheists, a bundle of epicures, and a great bundle of hypocrites."

The literature of this branch of theology abounds in graphic and varied descriptions of this realm of fire and sulphur—especially in the line of poetry—of which only a few specimens can be given. The following is from a poem by Dr. Joseph Trapp, an English divine:

"Doomed to live death and never to expire,
In floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire
The damned shall groan; fires of all kinds and forms;
In rain, and hail, in hurricanes and storms;
Liquid and solid, livid, red and pale;

A flaming mountain here, and there a flaming vale.
 The liquid fire makes seas, the solid shores;
 Arched o'er with flames the horrid concave roars.
 All Hell is fire—above, beside, below;
 Fires or in hard metallic substance glow,
 Or spout in cataracts, or in rivers flow.
 In bubbling eddies rolls the fiery tide,
 And sulphurous surges on each other ride.
 The hollow, winding vaults, and dens, and caves,
 Billow like furnaces with flaming waves.
 Pillars of flame in spiral volumes rise
 Like fiery snakes, and lick the infernal skies.
 Sulphur, the eternal fuel, unconsumed,
 Vomits redounding smoke, thick, unillumed."

The following is from Pollock's "Course of Time":

"Wide was the place,
 And deep as wide, and ruinous as deep.
 Beneath I saw a lake of burning fire,
 With tempest tost perpetually, and still
 The waves of fiery darkness 'gainst the rocks
 Of dark damnation broke, and music made
 Of melancholy sort; and overhead,
 And all around, wind warred with wind, storm howled
 To storm, and lightning, forked lightning, crossed,
 And thunder answered thunder, muttering sound
 Of sullen wrath; and far as sight could pierce,
 Or down descend in caves of hopeless depth,
 Tho' all that dungeon of unfading fire
 I saw most miserable beings walk—
 Burning continually, yet unconsumed;
 Forever wasting, yet enduring still;
 Dying perpetually, yet never dead.
 Some wandered lonely in the desert flames,
 And some in fell encounter fiercely met,
 With curses loud, and blasphemies, that made
 The cheek of darkness pale; and as they fought,
 And cursed, and gnashed their teeth, and wished to die,
 Their hollow eyes did utter streams of wo
 And there were groans that ended not, and sighs
 That always sighed, and tears that ever wept.
 And ever fell,—but not in mercy's sight."

Writers on this subject represent that all of man's corporeal senses will be made to minister to his torment in this dread abode. According to Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "This temporal fire is but painted fire in respect to that in hell.

We are amazed," he says, "to think of the inhumanity of Phalaris, who roasted men in his brazen bull; this was joy in respect to that fire of hell which penetrates the very entrails of the body without consuming them. . . . Such are the torments and miseries of hell, that if all the trees in the world were put in one heap, I would rather burn there till the day of judgment, than to suffer for the space of one hour that fire of hell!"

Of the suffering to come through the sense of *smell*, the same writer says, "Horrible was that torment used by Mezentius, to tie a living body to a dead, and then to leave them, until the infection and putrid exhalations of the dead had killed the living. What can be more abominable than for a living man to have his mouth laid close to that of a dead one, full of grubs and worms, where the living must receive all those pestilential vapors breathed forth from a corrupt carcass, and suffer such loathsomeness and abominable stink? But what is this in respect to hell, where each body of the damned is more loathsome and unsavory than a million of dead dogs, and all these pressed and crowded together in so strait a compass? . . . Hell is the world's sink, and the receptacle of all the filth in this great frame, and withal a deep dungeon where the air hath no access."

As to what shall be suffered through the sense of *taste*, the Bishop says:—"The scriptures tell us that the gall of dragons shall be their wine; and they shall taste the poison of asps to all eternity, unto which shall be joined an intolerable thirst and a dog-like hunger. . . . Famine is the most pressing of all necessities, and most deformed of all evils . . . Without doubt, the damned would rather tear themselves to pieces than suffer it."

The following is one of Jonathan Edwards' passages on this subject:—"The world will probably be converted into a great lake or liquid globe of fire,—a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed, which will always be in tempest, in which they shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day or night, vast waves or billows of fire continually roll-

ing over their heads, of which they shall forever be full of quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals shall forever be full of a glowing, melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and also, they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torments; not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one age, nor for two ages, nor for a hundred ages, nor for ten thousand millions of ages one after another, but forever and ever, without any end at all, and never, never be delivered."

Dr. Gardiner Spring says:—"The souls of all who have died in their sins are in hell; and their bodies, too, will be after the resurrection. When the omnipotent and angry God, who has access to all the avenues of distress in the corporeal frame and all the inlets to agony in the intellectual constitution, undertakes to punish, he will convince the universe that he does not gird himself to the work of retribution in vain;" "it will be a *glorious deed* when he who hung on Calvary shall cast those who have trodden his blood under their feet, into the furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The following passage is from Spurgeon's sermon on the "Resurrection of the Dead":—"When thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be a hell for it; but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin-hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused with agony. In fire exactly like that which we have on earth thy body will lie, asbestos-like, forever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament!"

In a tract "for children" entitled, "The Sight of Hell," Father Furniss says:—"Take a spark out of the kitchen fire, throw it into the sea, and it will go out. Take a little spark out of hell, less than a pin head, throw it into the sea, and it will not go out. In one moment it would dry up all the waters of the ocean, and set the whole world on a blaze."

Such are only a few specimens of what would fill volumes. It would be a relief, in looking them over, if we could say that they are the language of impassioned feeling—hyperbolic utterances—poetic imagery,—and must be understood in a qualified sense, if we would not mistake the meaning of the writers. But it is all too plain that such is not the case. They show marks of deliberation, and in some cases of special study to carry the idea that the language used falls short of expressing all that the reality is conceived to be. And as if the description given by Edwards, as quoted above, were not enough, he further says:—"After we have said our utmost and thought our utmost, all that we have said and thought is but a *faint shadow* of the reality."

And with this thought of Edwards agrees the following language of Calvin:—"As *no description can equal* the severity of the divine vengeance on the reprobates, their anguish and torment are figuratively represented to us under corporeal images; as darkness and gnashing of teeth, unextinguishable fire, a worm incessantly gnawing the heart. For there can be no doubt but that by such modes of expression the Holy Ghost *intended to confound all our faculties with horror.*"

Now, are these representations justified by anything that the Bible says? Are they in accord with its spirit? Will such tortures be inflicted by a just and merciful God? If the bosom of God were indeed a fountain of unalloyed malignity, could he do worse? And yet, thousands of good Christians follow the lead of those who have taught and of those who yet teach such doctrines,—without much thought, however, it must be confessed, of their awful import.

How came such views to obtain and hold a place in the theologies of the past? Anything like a full answer to this question would cover a wide field. A few words must suffice:

1. Beyond all question, the doctrine of bodily torture, in a hell of literal fire, in the future world, is of *heathen origin*. It existed outside of the Bible before the advent of Christ, and was a leading feature in the Mythology, not only of the

Greeks, Romans and Egyptians, but also of the Assyrians, Persians, Hindoos and Chinese.

2. During the first centuries of the Christian era, the converts to Christianity were from the nations subject to Pagan Rome,—all of them, excepting a few Jews, having previously been heathen. These converts, while they accepted Christ as a divine teacher, brought with them, from the very necessities of their situation, more or less of their former opinions and habits of thought; and some of them clung with greater or less tenacity to the doctrine in question. The result was, that after a struggle of centuries, it became a leading feature of the theology of the church, in which it has kept its place, though with slackened hold—especially in the Protestant portion—to the present day.

3. Aside from the faith—strong or weak in individuals, as the case may be—which the Church has in this doctrine, there are in the Church, in its present imperfect state, certain conditions, and certain elements of feeling, from which it receives support, and to whose requirements it ministers.

4. There is a veneration for the past; a respect for precedent; a pride of opinion and of spiritual ancestry; and especially a strong attachment to associations, into which particular modes of thought and particular usages have been interwoven—all of which raise their voices against change.

5. There is, in not a few, a feeling of spiritual pride, which looks down upon those of a contrary faith, as less favored of heaven, and as the special objects of the divine displeasure. Along with this, there is a disposition, not only to lord it over the faith of others, but also to terrify and harass supposed heretics with the threat of divine vengeance.

6. There is yet in the church a certain materialistic grossness of conception, which seems incompetent to take account of any consequences of human conduct not of corporeal type,—which can readily see the mark of a thunderbolt, but is blind to that paralysis of man's moral nature which the sting of sin induces. And when this condition of intellect is connected with a blind zeal, or with a spirit of revenge—from

which not a few of the adherents of Christianity have not yet been delivered—the mind seems naturally to revel in vivid descriptions of corporeal torture, and is easily stimulated to imitate what is supposed to be God's method of treating his enemies.

Such are some of the influences which tend to support this doctrine; such are some of the sentiments which it feeds, and from which, in turn, it receives nourishment and hospitality.

Does it seem too much to say, that the spirit of this doctrine is baleful? That it is the spirit of intolerance and persecution? Yet it is one of those manifestations of human imperfection which crop out sharply, now and then, in individuals and communities of all classes and all times.

There was something of this spirit in the first disciples of Jesus, when they said of one whom they had encountered—"Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not with us;" and again, when, on account of an imagined indignity offered by the inhabitants of a Samaritan village, they inquired,—“Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” There was much of it in the hearts of those who subjected the early Christians to martyrdom; there was much of it in the Church, in the Dark Ages, and in later times, when Catholics and Protestants, in order to punish and repress heresy, resorted to the rack, the stake, and the gibbet. It lingers with us now, manifesting itself in modified forms. We witness it when an attempt is made by the power of numbers, or by assumed authority, to overawe and silence those who express dissent from accepted views. We witness it in such vindictive utterances as that of Dr. Spring, above quoted—so different from that of Jesus on the cross. “The bloody queen Mary” gave natural voice to it when she said,—“As the souls of heretics are hereafter to be eternally burning in hell, there can be nothing more proper than for me to imitate the divine vengeance by burning them on earth.”

That sin will be adequately and justly punished, I cannot doubt—I firmly believe; that such punishment will extend into the future world, I have not aimed to question in what I have said; what I do maintain is that the descriptions of such punishment I have quoted, and similar ones, are at war with that sense of justice which the Author of our being has implanted in our very natures, and equally an imputation upon his character as our divine Parent.

Yours, as ever,

JULY 26, 1879.

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LETTER XXIV.

Examination of Passages of Scripture Supposed to Teach Bodily Torment in Fire in the Future World—Shown to have their Application to Events in This Life.

FRIEND G.:—The adherents of Christianity who hold the tenet of a hell of literal fire for bodily torment in the future world, claim to do so on the authority of the Bible. So doing, they are obliged not only to apply the passages on which they rely to that world, but also to take their language in a literal sense. I propose to inquire, now, whether such application and interpretation are correct. In this matter, as in others, the scriptures should be allowed to interpret themselves. The elder should be viewed in the light of the later, and the later in that of the elder. Let us, then, look at some of the passages in question in this light. Take, first, those which speak of *hell fire*, in connection with the expression "when their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." These and their parallels are Math. v: 22-30, x: 28, xviii: 8, 9, xxiii: 15, 33; Mark ix: 43-49; and Luke xii: 4, 5.

In these passages the Savior warns his disciples of the danger of being cast into this hell, and assures the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees that they cannot escape it.

The word in these passages translated "hell," is *gehenna*. It occurs twelve times in the New Testament,—eleven in the passages cited, and once in James. It is a word of Hebrew origin, compounded of *Gee*, valley, and *Hinnom*, the name of its owner. This valley is situated just out of Jerusalem, and is repeatedly referred to in the Old Testament. It was originally a beautiful vale, planted with trees and watered by fountains.

Here the idolatrous Jews set up the brazen image of Moloch and offered, among other sacrifices, their own children. The pious king Josiah put an end to these diabolical rites,—“and he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire of Moloch.”—II. Kings xxiii: 10.

This vale, so defiled, was afterward made a receptacle for the filth and offal of the city, into which the carcasses of animals and the bodies of criminals capitally executed were cast. This filth and these bodies bred worms. To prevent infection by putrefaction, a continual fire was kept up to consume these substances. Hence the expression, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Thus this place became one of abhorrence and detestation to the Jew,—a place into which he would very naturally dread to go, or to be cast.

How appropriate, then, that this odious locality should be held up before the obstinately wicked Jews, as emblematic of the punishment which they should receive, individually and nationally, for their persistent idolatries and kindred iniquities,—as the very place, indeed, in which more or less of this punishment should be visited upon them. And this is just what was done.

The prophet Jeremiah was commanded to take an earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people and of the priests, and go forth to this valley, at the entry of the east gate of the city, and declare the word of the Lord concerning their wickedness, and the punishment which should come upon them, saying, among other things, “Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter. . . . And thou shalt break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel that cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord,

and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet." See the nineteenth chapter of Jeremiah.

The same locality and the same punishment are undoubtedly referred to in Isaiah lvi: 23, 24, where occurs the expression, "for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched."

These passages contain a prediction of what was to come upon the nation in aftertimes—"Behold the days come," etc. When were these days to come? Have they come? If so, when? May we not go to the New Testament for the light we need in answer?

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew we have account of a discourse by our Savior "to the multitudes and to his disciples," in which, in words sharper than a two-edged sword, he lays bare the wickedness and hypocrisy of the chief rulers of the nation. Among other things, he accuses them of building the tombs of the prophets and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, saying, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets,"—while their own acts, otherwise, witnessed that they were "the children of them which killed the prophets." On the heels of this accusation, he exclaims, "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell (*gehenna*)?"

What more natural, now, than to understand our Savior as here predicting the very calamities prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah? And what more natural than to understand him as referring to the judgments then impending? And when we consider what came upon the nation a few years after our Savior's utterances, in the destruction of their temple and chief city, what more natural than to fix upon such event as the fulfilment of the predictions of Jesus and the prophets?

This view is confirmed by what our Savior says immediately following, in the same and succeeding chapters, ending with the twenty-fifth, and in parallel passages in the other Gospels, in which he speaks of the great catastrophe, and of pre-

ceeding events and signs, characterizing them altogether as a period of great tribulation, such as had not been from the beginning of the world, and fixing the time by the declarations, "All these things shall come upon this generation"; "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."

At the close of the long period of war, extending from the year 66 to the year 70, during which all of Palestine was invaded by foreign foes and torn by internal factions, Jerusalem was taken by the Roman army under Titus, after a siege of five or six months. This siege happened when vast multitudes were assembled from the surrounding countries to attend the great feast of the Passover, the great bulk, if not all of whom were confined within the narrow limits of the city. To the sword without, were added divided councils and bloody strife, starvation and pestilence within. So terrible was the waste of life, that more than a million, it is said, perished in the siege and capture of the city. How vast a burial-ground must have been needed for these dead! How striking the prophetic declaration, "This place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter. And they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place to bury!"

Therefore, interpreting the language of Jesus in regard to *gehenna* in the light of the Old Testament, and of what actually happened to the Jews, there would seem to be no possibility of mistaking his meaning—no doubt that he meant just what the prophecies declared.

In his explanation of the parable of the "tares," and in the parable of the "net"—Matt. xiii—Jesus speaks of a "furnace of fire," into which he says the wicked and things offending shall be cast in "the end of the world."

What is meant by this furnace of fire? Are the words to be understood in a literal sense? Are they referable to a future state of being? Let us go again to the Old Testament. Egypt is repeatedly spoken of as an iron "furnace" to the Hebrews.—Deut. iv: 20; I. Kings viii: 51; Jer. xi: 4. In Isaiah xxxi: 9 it is declared that the Lord's "fire is in Zion,

and his furnace in Jerusalem." In Ezekiel—chap. xxii—we have a remarkable passage, of which the following is a part:—"Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, in the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it, so will I gather you in my anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you."

If this passage in Ezekiel does not refer to what came upon the Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it refers to a similar event under Nebuchadnezzar. In either case, the furnace of which it speaks was in this world. Guided again by the Old Testament in the interpretation of the New, why may we not conclude that Jesus here speaks of what was to transpire on earth? Why not, indeed, conclude that the furnace of fire named in the parables in question is one with the fire of *gehenna*?

In the book of Revelation—chapters xix and xx—we read of "a lake of fire," "a lake of fire burning with brimstone," in which it is declared that certain wicked characters shall have their part. What are we to understand by this lake, and to what state of being does it belong?

Few, at the present, will say that this language is to be taken literally. If not, what is the origin of the figure, and its application? In the book of Genesis—chapter xix—we have account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by a rain of brimstone and fire. These cities were in the valley of the Jordan, and occupied either a portion of the land now covered by the Dead Sea, or stood upon the plains immediately adjacent to it. It seems a question whether such destruction was caused by a volcanic eruption, or some other natural cause. At any rate, the shores of the sea or lake give every evidence of having passed through a fiery ordeal. Bituminous and pitchy substances are said to rise from the bottom of the lake and abound on its shores.

Such being the facts, it seems quite natural that this lake should be characterized as a lake of fire and brimstone; and as the destruction of these cities is represented as coming upon them in the manner it did, in consequence of their great wickedness, it seems equally natural that the Revelator should portray the punishment which he predicts should come upon the characters he names, under the figure of destruction in such lake—making the former an example of the latter.

Peter and Jude both refer in this manner to the destruction of the cities in question,—“An example unto those that after should live ungodly;” “set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Peter connects his reference to the destruction of these cities with the fiery trial about to come, in which the elements should “melt with fervent heat;” and no doubt but Jude wrote with the same ordeal in view. Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, no doubt refers to the same event, when he declares, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance,” etc.

The above are the leading passages which speak of destruction and punishment under the figure of *fire*. They seem all to relate to the same period of time—to one grand epoch—the winding up of the Jewish dispensation, involving the destruction of their temple and capital city, and the indescribable calamities which were then to come upon the ill-fated Jews. That the passages are parallel in this respect, will further appear by noting that a number of events are coupled together, and either in the passages or in their context, treated as concurrent, to wit:—a coming of the Son of Man, the end of the world, and a judgment.

These events seem to be connected together in the twenty-third, twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew. These chapters comprise virtually one discourse of Jesus to his disciples—the first part having been delivered in the temple “to the multitude and to his disciples” in common, and the rest to his disciples privately, on retiring to the Mount of Olives. Jesus having predicted the ruin that should come

upon Jerusalem and the people, the disciples inquired,—“Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” He proceeds to answer, and winds up by a scenic representation of the impending judgment.

Having assured his disciples that this coming and end should transpire before that generation should pass away, he adds,—“*When* the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, *then*” shall be the judgment, followed by the sentence—“Come ye blessed. . . . Depart from me, ye cursed.”

In the passages in Thessalonians, and Peter, and Jude, and Revelation, this coming of the Lord is linked with a judgment, or reward and punishment. Our Savior connects them, in like manner, as his language is recorded in Matt. xvi: 27, 28, in which he also says—“There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

That the passages in question are parallel, further appears from the similarity of language and figurative representations common to them. The coming, etc., was to be unawares, as a snare, as a thief in the night, in the clouds of heaven, with the angels and saints, with signs in the sun and moon and stars with a shaking of the powers of heaven, with the heavens on fire, with the earth and heaven fleeing away, etc. “The throne of his glory,” in Matthew, is most certainly one with “the great white throne” in Revelation—both being representative of the seat of judgment.

By the phrase “end of the world” is not meant the end of the material world, but of the Jewish age, or economy, which was then in process of dissolution and about to cease. In this sense, it is synonymous with the expressions, “last day,” “last days,” “last time,” “last times,” etc.,—terms so used as to show that the time referred to was then passing or just at hand. According to the answer of our Savior to his disciples, “the end of the world” was to come in that generation;

and he uses the same phrase in connection with the parables of the "tares" and the "net." In giving commission to his apostles, he assures them he will be with them unto the end of the world. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, and speaking of those then living, says—"Upon whom the ends of the world are come." In Hebrews we read of Christ—"But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared," etc.

It is to be observed that the phrase "end of the world" is used with some latitude. In some instances it is connected with the coming of Christ, and represented as past, while in others, so connected, it is spoken of as yet future. The explanation is found, in part, in the fact that two comings are spoken of. These are both mentioned in close connection in Hebrews ix: 26-28. At this writing, Christ had once appeared, and was afterward to appear the second time.

But how could both of these comings, separated by from forty to seventy years, be said to be in the end of the world? The Jewish economy embraced some fifteen centuries. The last of these centuries might be said, in a general way, to be the end of that era,—just as the month of December may be said to be the end of one year, while the extreme end is at the close of the last day of that month. The second coming of Christ was to be at the extreme end of the Jewish age, while his first coming happened several decades prior, yet in the end of a long period of centuries.

An examination of the passages in which the phrases "last days," "last times," etc., occur, will show that they relate to the same period as the phrase "end of the world," and that they are used with like latitude. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, quoting what Joel says should come to pass in the last days, applies his prophesy to the time he was speaking. In Hebrews we read, God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Peter says Jesus "was manifest in these last times." John, in one of his epistles, says, "We know it is the last time." And Peter, again, with like reference, says, "The end of all things is at hand."

Lest I make this communication too long, I must reserve some further observations I wish to make on the scriptures under the consideration, to be presented in another.

Truly Yours,

JULY 30, 1879.

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LETTER XXV.

Examination of Passages, Continued, etc.

FRIEND G.:—In the book of Revelation,^{*} the *dead* are mentioned as the subjects of the judgment named:—"And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books." This consideration has, no doubt, been counted as supporting the theory that the judgment spoken of belongs to the future world. Does it do this?

Here, again, the Scriptures should be allowed to interpret themselves. There are other passages which speak of the dead as the subjects of judgment, and these will help us to determine who they are. Peter, as recorded in the Acts, in preaching before C  rnelius and speaking of Jesus, says that he "was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." In one of his epistles, speaking of certain characters, he says they "shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Paul, in writing to Timothy, says,— "I charge thee, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom," etc. From the above, it appears that the quick and the dead are coupled together in the ordeal of judgment. The language of Paul to his Ephesian brethren shows, specifically, who were the quick and the dead. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

The quick and the dead, then, were the believers and the unbelievers, the friends and the opposers of Christianity.

This judgment was to be at the "appearing" or coming of Christ; and it is declared that he was "ready" for this work. And this agrees with the further declaration of Peter:—"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God (the quickened): and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them (the dead) that obey not the gospel of God?" The dead, then, who were to be judged by him who was to sit on the "great white throne," "the throne of his glory," were not the literally dead, but men in the flesh—"dead in trespasses and sins."

It is well to note, in this connection, what is indicated in Revelation as to the time of the leading events named. The book seems to be the record of a protracted vision, in which a panorama of important events—past, present and future—was made to pass before the revelator, and which he was required to write out. The direction is:—"Write the things which thou hast seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

Touching the things which were yet to happen, it is said, in the first chapter, that they "must shortly come to pass," "for the time is at hand." In the last chapter, the angel which showed John these things is represented as saying to him,— "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." Then is added the assurance,— "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man as his work shall be." . . . "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen."

These declarations indicate that whatever references there may be in the book, by implication or otherwise, to distant results, the events dwelt upon and portrayed in the bold imagery used,—such as the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of pestilence; a rain of hail and fire and blood; a burning mountain cast into the sea; a burning star falling upon the rivers and fountains of waters; an army of locusts with scorpion power; an army of horsemen on horses breathing fire and smoke and brimstone; a great red dragon; the war of the dragon and his angels against

Michael and his angels; his persecution of the woman clothed with the sun, and her man-child; the beast with seven heads and ten horns; the seven angels having the seven last plagues; the woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy; the fall of Babylon (Jerusalem), also called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified; and the final triumph of the "Faithful and True," on his white horse of victory, over the combined armies of Gog and Magog,—the events so portrayed, I say, must be regarded as then passing, or as just at hand.

Some more particular notice of the passage in Thessalonians seems appropriate. How could people in distant Thessalonica, it may be asked, be seriously affected by events happening at Jerusalem and in its vicinity? The proper application of the passage will more clearly appear by ascertaining who "troubled" the Thessalonian Christians, and what is meant by "destruction from the presence of the Lord."

By reference to Acts xvii:1, it will be seen that there was a synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica; that Paul in his travels visited and preached there; and that the unbelieving Jews raised an uproar and assaulted the Christians and "troubled" the people and the rulers of the city. The trouble was so serious that the brethren sent away Paul, and also Silas, who was with him. The persecution so started was doubtless kept up for years. These persecuting Jews, then, were the ones who were to be punished as described.

It will not do to understand "presence" in this passage to mean omnipresence, as that would involve a contradiction,—unless, indeed, the term "destruction" means extinction of being. God can, of course, annihilate any being he has created, but there is no reason to suppose anything of the kind is here meant.

The Mosaic economy, for the purpose of its mission, gave Jehovah a *local* presence; and accordingly, the Jews, throughout their history, were in the habit of speaking of him as in a certain place. This place was preëminently the tabernacle,

while they were in the wilderness and until the temple was erected, and thereafter in the temple. The Lord, in giving direction to Moses, in the wilderness, touching the construction of the ark and the mercy-seat, says,—“And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”—Ex. xxv: 21-22.

After the temple was built and the ark put in its proper place, and after the temple was dedicated, the Lord appeared to Solomon and said,—“For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.”—II. Chron. vii: 16.

After the people of Judah and Jerusalem had gone on in a long course of wickedness, the Lord declared, by the mouth of the prophet,—“Therefore, behold I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence.”—Jer. xxiii: 39.

According with the above declaration, we have the following record:—“For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out of his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.”—II. Kings xxiv: 20.

In the time of the apostles, the Jews, though subject to the Romans, still retained their national unity and kept up their religious customs and temple worship, anxiously looking for the Messiah as their deliverer. Many of them, for the purpose of trade and business, had become residents of the chief cities of the surrounding nations. In doing so, however, they kept up their communication with their native country, adhered to their religion, built themselves syna-

gogues for local worship and went up annually, or oftener, to their national festivals at Jerusalem.

Jerusalem and its temple were the pride and glory of the Jew, whether at home or abroad. Mt. Zion was the cynosure which attracted and held him wherever he was. In near vision, he would exultingly exclaim,—“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. . . . Walk about Zion and go round about her: tell the towns thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.”—Psalms xlviii: 2-14.

In a distant land, his face was intently Zion-ward. His thoughts and affections were there. In her prosperity he rejoiced. When calamity came upon her, he was grieved and humiliated. We have a striking example of the depth of this feeling in the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm—intensely patriotic and sorrowful and exquisitely beautiful—“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,—Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

Even in his utmost degeneracy, in the days of the apostles, the Jew remembered his Zion and came there to worship, however he may have failed to apprehend the spiritual significance of her rites. Mount Zion was his own sacred ground. The Gentile could be there only by suffrance, and then only

in her outer courts. But when, in addition to the wrath he had been treasuring up for generations, he reached the climax of his wickedness in the rejection of his Messiah, he forfeited the last remnant of his special right and incurred eviction.

Then came the Roman legions; then did the "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place;" then was Jerusalem "trodden down of the Gentiles;" then was the temple destroyed and its rites abolished; then was pronounced the sentence,—*"Depart from me, ye cursed;"* and then were the unbelieving Jews who troubled the Christians, whether at Jerusalem, or Thessalonica, or elsewhere, driven "from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

It is not unreasonable to suppose that some of the identical Jews who troubled the Christians at Thessalonica were at Jerusalem at the time of this catastrophe. However this may be, it affected all Jews wherever they were.

That the passage in Matthew and its parallels in Mark and Luke and the passage in Thessalonians relate to the same event, will still more clearly appear by considering how closely they agree in certain expressions found in them. In Thessalonians we are told that Jesus was to come "taking vengeance." In Luke we read:—"These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." The time of "taking vengeance" must have been in the appointed "days of vengeance."

Again: The "everlasting punishment" in Matthew and the "everlasting destruction" in Thessalonians are equivalent expressions, and undoubtedly have the same application. The Jews as a people, in addition to what they underwent at the time, have been enduring the sentence of eviction, with its sequences, for eighteen centuries,—with how much time yet to run, Omniscience only knows.

It should not be taken for granted that the passages in question must have their fulfilment in a future state of being, because the terms "everlasting" and "eternal" are applied, one or the other, to the "fire," the "destruction" and the "punish-

ment" named. When it is considered that these and equivalent terms are more or less indefinite and are often applied to things that have their beginning and end in time, as Bible students well know, it must be admitted that their use in these passages is not sufficient, of itself, to carry the events named into another mode of being. Such use, therefore, furnishes no objection against applying the passages as I have done.

As the events in question were to occur at the end of the Jewish age, and this end is represented under the figure of the destruction of the material world, and must, of course, be succeeded by a new order of things, it seems natural that this new order should be characterized in a corresponding manner. Accordingly, as the old heavens and earth pass away, "new heavens and a new earth" come in their place, as set forth by Peter and by the Revelator. This can be none other than the Christian dispensation,—further characterized as "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." This new order was in its incipient state during the lives and labors of the apostles; and hence we read in Hebrews,—"*Ye are come unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*" etc.

The same change—from the old to the new—is indicated by our Savior when he says to the Jews,—"*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;*" and again, when he says,—"*Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" So, also, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, another of the passages which represent punishment and loss under the figure of *fire*, and which I will consider somewhat particularly.

In this passage, found in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, the word translated "hell" is *hades*, answering to *sheol* in the Old Testament, the general Scriptural meaning of which is

the grave, the underground, or the realm of the dead, irrespective of their character. In their intercourse with the heathen, the Jews had learned the doctrine of reward and punishment in hades, which, according to their mythology, was divided into two apartments,—elysium, the abode of the good, and tartarus, the abode of the wicked. The frame-work of the parable is said, moreover, to have been taken from a Babylonish writing.

Without either adopting or discarding this heathen view, Jesus makes use of the parable to illustrate a great epochal change about to transpire,—endeavoring thus, as he had done in many ways, to impress on the minds of his hearers the serious consequences to themselves which such change must involve. He so modifies it as to make “Abraham’s bosom” stand for the apartment of the blessed—yet allowing it to remain in seeing and hearing distance of the other apartment, which he designates by the general term, *hades*.

A parable is a narration under which *something else* is figured. Admitting the parabolic character of the passage, we are debarred from applying it literally, or as presenting an *example*, simply, of what it represents; that is to say, we are debarred from the position that the rich man is simply an example of a class of rich men and Lazarus an example of a class of beggars. We are also debarred from assuming that the terms “died,” “buried,” “hell,” “Abraham’s bosom,” “gulf,” “eyes,” “finger,” “tongue” “flame,” “dogs,” etc., are used in a literal sense.

Another strong reason for avoiding such interpretation, is the fact that not all rich men have Abraham for their father, nor have they Moses and the prophets, nor are they all bad men. And, on the other hand, not all good men are beggars, nor are all beggars good men, with a clear title to Abraham’s bosom.

How, then, is the parable to be understood, and what is its application?

The rich man and his five brethren represent the Jews—the rich man, more particularly, the priesthood and governing

power. They had a common father, Abraham. They had also Moses and the prophets. On the other hand, Lazarus, as a beggar, represents the Gentiles, who were aliens from the common-wealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.

Up to the time to which the parable relates, the Jews, as represented by the rich man, had had their good things, and the Gentiles, like Lazarus, their evil things. The time came for a change. The scope of the parable indicates that this change, on the part of the Jews, was in consequence of their misimprovement of the special religious privileges with which they had been favored and their stubborn unbelief in Moses and the prophets. On the part of the Gentiles, it indicates that they came into possession of such blessings by coming into the faith of Abraham—by accepting the testimony of Moses and the prophets.

To bring this out with the greatest force, the beggar is represented as dying and as being carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man as also dying and being buried, while his five brethren remain alive. In hades the rich man lifts up his eyes and sees Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom—by birthright his own place. Being in torment, he calls on his father, Abraham, to send Lazarus to his relief. Abraham, acknowledging the relation between them, reminds him of his own and Lazarus' former condition and of the change that has now come—leaving an impassable gulf between them. Failing to obtain relief, he next prays that Lazarus may be sent to his father's house to warn his brethren, lest they also come to the same place of torment. Abraham replies that it will be of no avail, as, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one come to them from the dead.

The impassable "gulf," separating the descendants of Abraham from their common ancestors, is simply a figurative representation of their obdurate unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah, foretold by Moses and the prophets,—an unbelief persisted in even after Jesus "rose from the dead"; and as to

the great bulk of the Jews, this gulf has remained to the present day.

Hades, according to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, is to be destroyed. "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, (*sheol, hades, hell,*) I will be thy destruction."—Hosea xiii:14. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, (*hades, hell,*) where is thy victory?"—I. Cor. xv:55. When this takes place, the impassable gulf will no longer exist. And so, making further application of the metaphor, when the "blindness in part" of the Jews gives way, as Paul insists it will, when "the fulness of the Gentiles" shall have come in, all Israel will return to the faith and bosom of Abraham, and the gulf of unbelief will be no more.

As ever, sincerely yours.

Nov. 4, 1879.

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LETTER XXVI

The Question of Future Retribution Not Raised—Leading Facts and Principles Furnish the Safest Basis of Doctrine—What are Some of these—God has Revealed Himself Otherwise than through the Bible, but not so Clearly—Meaning of the Phrase, Personal God—Recognition of a Personal God, and of Man's Responsibility to Him, Essential to Good Order and the Highest Development of Man—Conclusion.

FRIEND G.:—In the view taken of the passages of Scripture under consideration, in my last two communications, I have not aimed to raise the question whether the Bible does, or does not, teach the doctrine of retribution in a future world. I have simply aimed to show that the passages in question have an obvious and proper application to scenes and events in this world, and that they, of course, afford no proof of the grossly material doctrine of a hell or lake of literal fire, in which the bodies of men will be tormented in the eternal world.

It seems to me unwise to attempt to evolve or to support any theory touching the government of God and the destiny of his creatures, simply by an appeal to Scripture terms and expressions which are susceptible of different meanings and different applications, dependent upon their connections and the circumstances under which they were used. The wiser and safer way is to build on the great facts and principles revealed in external nature, in man, and in the Bible, as they address themselves to man's reason and common sense. Consider what some of these are:

God is the Creator of all worlds and all beings, and is the rightful governor of the universe.

Man is a moral being, amenable to God and his laws for all his actions.

All men come into the world imperfect—subject to vanity—and as they arrive at the age of accountability become actual sinners, greater or less.

All men, in their imperfect and fallen condition, need help for their recovery and moral elevation.

God does not abandon men because of their sins. On the contrary, he pities them—one and all—and sends his Son to be their helper.

In the mission of his Son, through the agency of his spirit and his word, God has provided ample means for the deliverance of all men from their fallen condition and their elevation to purity and bliss. The means so provided are made available and effective through the voluntary coöperation of man—and only so.

In the plan which infinite wisdom has adopted for the help of man as a moral being, all possible contingencies and obstacles have been anticipated; and the gracious assurance is given, for man's encouragement, that under the reign of Jesus the appointed means shall be continued until the contemplated result is accomplished.

During the process of man's trial and development and as a means to the great end, he is subjected to stern moral discipline—made to reap according to what he sows—made to eat the fruit of his own doings. Wayward and disobedient, his bitter experiences are proportionate to his perversity. From such result there is no relief, but in ceasing from evil and becoming obedient to truth and right.

Precisely what measure of punishment man should receive for his misdeeds, no finite mind can determine. Of this we may be sure, that a being of infinite wisdom and goodness can neither misjudge nor do injustice. We may be sure, also, that his inflictions will not do violence to that sense of justice which he has imbedded in our moral natures.

In judging as well as we may in this matter, it is further our right—our duty, even—to take as our guide the represen-

tations Deity has made in his word of his own character, and of his disposition toward us. Let us notice what some of these representations are:

God is love. Love can do us no ill. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Such chastening must be beneficent. As God is unchangeable in nature, so is he in motive and in the ends he seeks. Loving once, he loves always. Infinite in wisdom and in power, the good he seeks cannot elude his grasp. Infinite in mercy and in justice, these attributes harmonize and seek the same ends. They are the mercy and justice of infinite love.

There is special significance in the representations which the Bible makes of the paternal character of God. This extends to the whole race. We are all "his offspring." He is "our Father"—even in our disobedience. Nothing short of annihilation can dissolve this tie. He is our good Father—better than any earthly father. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

While, therefore, we are not competent to determine the measure of punishment—either in weight or duration—which man deserves for his sins, of this we may be sure,—that neither in time nor in eternity, will Deity inflict on him any penalties inconsistent with his own character, as he has revealed himself in his word and in his works.

Thus do I respond to your note of complaint that I have not, and of course will not, meet what you regard as an insuperable objection against the Bible and the God of the Bible. I trust you will be relieved of any suspicion that I aim to evade any point of difficulty you have presented and especially the one you seem to fall back on as your dernier reli-

ance in support of your charge of tyranny against the God of the Bible.

As you do not believe the Bible of divine authority, nor in the existence of such God, my explanations and reasonings may seem to you of little account. Nevertheless, as you have inquired my views, I give them for what they are worth.

I have taken considerable pains, as you see, to show that certain passages of Scripture, containing the language you quote, with others of a similar character, have not the application you assume and consequently do not support your allegations. I have performed this labor in the faint hope that, on further consideration, you may yet discover some glimmerings of light indicating that possibly there may be such a God as the Bible represents, and that this book reveals his truth; and in the further hope that if such light ever does greet your vision, you may be helped to the conclusion that your strongest objection to this venerable volume has no foundation in fact.

In accepting and defending the Bible as a medium of special revelation, it is not necessary to maintain that Deity has never, through any other agency, nor in any other manner, revealed himself or his truth to the children of men, and that consequently all to whom this revelation has not come have been left in entire moral darkness. This truth has, in a greater or less degree, appeared in all nations and in all periods. By the masses, it has been very dimly seen. Individuals among them have apprehended it with more distinctness; and in the degree in which they have reflected its light, they have stood forth as the sages and oracles of the times in which they lived.

The Bible, indeed, recognizes the fact that Deity has so manifested himself, together with the fact that such manifestations have been insufficient to overcome the darkness shrouding the nations and to lift the masses of the people from the low plain of sensualism, superstition, and idolatry.

The great apostle of the Gentiles especially affirmed this fact. In writing to his brethren at Rome, insisting on the

accountability of the Gentile world to God, he declared that "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. . . . For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing, or else excusing, one another."

So in his memorable address to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill. Using for his text the inscription on one of their altars—"To the Unknown God"—he declared to them the "God that made the world and all things therein," as the great overruling being whom, through his beneficence manifested in giving life and breath to all things, they might feel after and find near,—the one, indeed, whom certain of their own poets had apprehended as the Parent of the human family.

So, too, to the priest of Jupiter and his people at Lystra, he declared that God "left not himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

That some of the sages of the East, through feeling after God, now and then obtained glimpses of his truth, would seem to be exemplified in the fact that a company of them were warned of the advent of the Messiah and visited him, according to Matthew, immediately after his birth into the world. The account we have of this visit, though brief, is suggestive and exceedingly interesting.

"Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that was born King of the Jews, for we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him."

The guiding star brought them to Jerusalem. Their visit troubled Herod and all Jerusalem. A council was called to ascertain where this King was to be born. The answer was,

in Bethlehem. Thither Herod sent the wise men, to search and report to him. The star they saw in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they again saw it, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Finding the young child with his mother, they fell down and worshipped him and presented to him gifts,—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Warned of God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country another way.

What had these Magi seen and found at the end and as the result of their long journey, of not less, probably, than a thousand miles? To all human appearance, simply an ordinary human child in the care of his mother, in very humble circumstances. Blind unbelief says at once that nothing but superstition can make more out of it. Far different was the estimate of these wise men; and the world knows what has followed.

While in their own land, these Magi must have been somehow impressed with the fact that a personage was about to appear who should answer "the desire of all nations." Their long journey, the star which guided them, their exceeding great joy, their worship and offerings, indicate, together, a wondrous vision on their part of the good and glory to come. They were certainly not deceived in this matter; and the tribute they so paid to the Founder of Christianity is a significant indication of the superiority of the revelation that comes to man through his mission, over anything that had been otherwise revealed to the sages of the Orient.

Our discussion has involved the question of the existence of a personal God, and has been carried on without any attempt by either of us to define just what is meant by the phrase "personal God," or by the word *person* as applied to God. Introducing the term first, you denied the existence of such God. I have maintained the opposite throughout; and yet, we may not have understood the term alike. Perhaps the want of such understanding has made no difference between us. Whatever explanation I might have made, your denial would likely have been all the same. You expressly affirm that the

God of the Bible is a *myth*, and deny the existence of any power higher than Nature. I maintain the existence of a Being supreme over Nature. Our respective positions have thus been clearly defined, and essentially we have understood each other.

However, in connection with the general subject, in view of the representations of Scripture and of the not uncommon use of this term as applied to Deity, I am inclined to offer a few words here, indicating what seems to me a reasonable view in the premises.

So far as I recollect, this term is only once in Scripture expressly applied to Deity, and that in Hebrews,—where the Son is described as the brightness of his Father's glory and "the express image of his *person*."

The word "person" does not necessarily imply a tangible bodily form, though in the common mind, and in popular language, they seem to be intimately associated,—so that where Deity is spoken of as a person, in the minds of some, the idea of bodily form at once suggests itself. In discriminating minds this idea is rejected, and with it, such use of the word in question, is perhaps unnecessarily and unwisely discarded.

When the life has left a human body, we no longer associate with that body the idea of a person. The person has departed; only its former tabernacle remains. If, then, we admit the personal existence of a human being, apart from the body it formerly inhabited, or that the body apart from the life is not the man, we may with propriety speak of Deity as a personal being, without implying that he exists in bodily form. And this seems to accord with the Scripture representations—both in the Old and New Testaments.

The second command of the Decalogue is:—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them," etc. This command not only prohibits the worship of images, but seems to exclude the idea that God exists in any conceivable bodily form.

In various ways God is represented in the Scriptures as everywhere present and all-seeing. This is the conception which the Psalmist had of him when he exclaimed,—“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me,” etc. Jesus emphasized this truth in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, in which he taught that God is a spirit, to be anywhere and everywhere worshipped by his confiding and obedient children.

True, all through the Scriptures, God is spoken of as though he had bodily parts,—as eyes, ears, hands and feet,—as seeing, hearing and going about from place to place; but this language is evidently figurative and intended simply to represent the fact of his concern and agency in the affairs of this world.

Wherein, then, consists the personality of Deity? In answer, I ask,—Wherein consists the personality of man? Evidently in his *mind*. So the personality of God is the personality of mind. God is the INFINITE MIND. And what we know of the mind of man enables us to form some just conception of God as the infinite mind. And if we concede the existence of a personal God, the inference is easy and natural, that all the essential mind-attributes of man are found in Deity in infinite perfection. It is in this sense, I apprehend, that man is said to be created in the image of God.

As you may call to mind, I have not only earnestly insisted on the fact of the existence of a personal God of infinite perfection, but along with this, on the fact that man is so created and so endowed as to realize, with greater or less distinctness, his responsibility to a higher power. And I have further insisted that this consciousness of responsibility is an essential factor among the agencies available for the elevation of individuals and the race,—so much so, indeed, that in proportion as it is left out of account, or weakened in its influ-

ence, through denial or doubt and the ascendancy of the baser passions, the great masses of the unreasoning and unthinking will drop lower and lower in the scale of moral being.

I desire that this consideration may be allowed its full weight. I am persuaded it is of the first importance,—essential, indeed, to the welfare of community in general and to the well-being and permanency of our republican institutions.

Let the conviction that there is no power higher than human authority, to which men are amenable, take full possession of the public mind, and one of the strongest safeguards of private and public virtue will be removed. Counting themselves mere animals of a higher order, they will give loose rein to their animal propensities, to their love of pleasure gain, and power, restrained only by considerations of the lowest order.

The consequences of such a moral state can only be imagined. It is doubtful whether society could be held together. The few comparatively pure-minded and well-disposed, would be unable to stem the tide of passion and greed bearing rule in high places and low. The weak would be the unprotected prey of the strong, and existence would become a burden and a curse.

In conclusion:—Thus have I complied with your request for my views on the subject-matter of our correspondence. Recognizing the vast importance of the subject, I regret that I have not been able to do it better justice. Though conscious of the imperfection of my performance, I have, nevertheless, strong faith in the substantial correctness of the views presented.

In closing our correspondence, as I propose now to do, on my part, I must express my gratification that we have got along in it so pleasantly; and also my trust that it has tended to our mutual profit. Be assured, my friend, that you have my best wishes for your highest welfare—now and ever.

Sincerely yours,

MAY 25, 1880.

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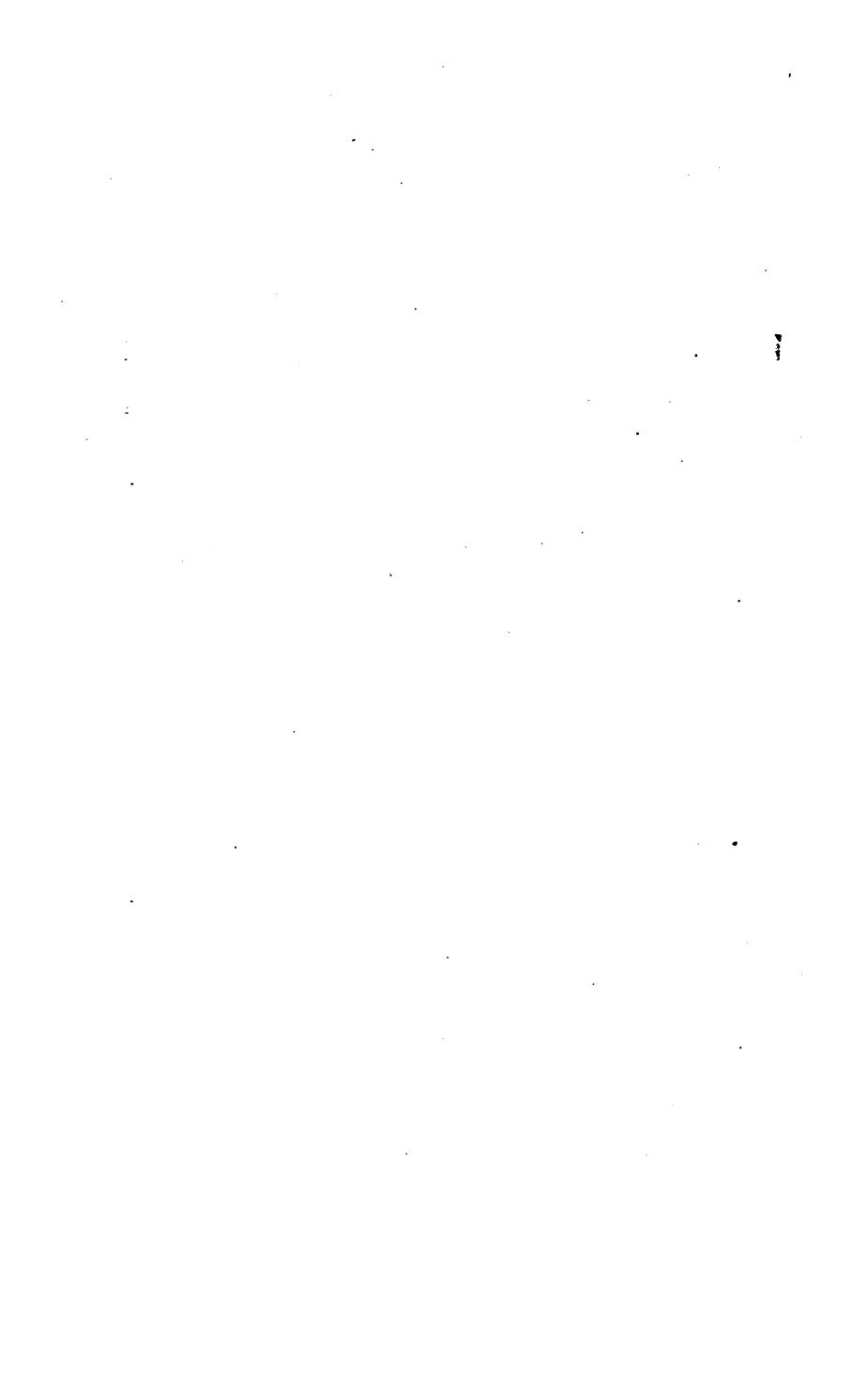
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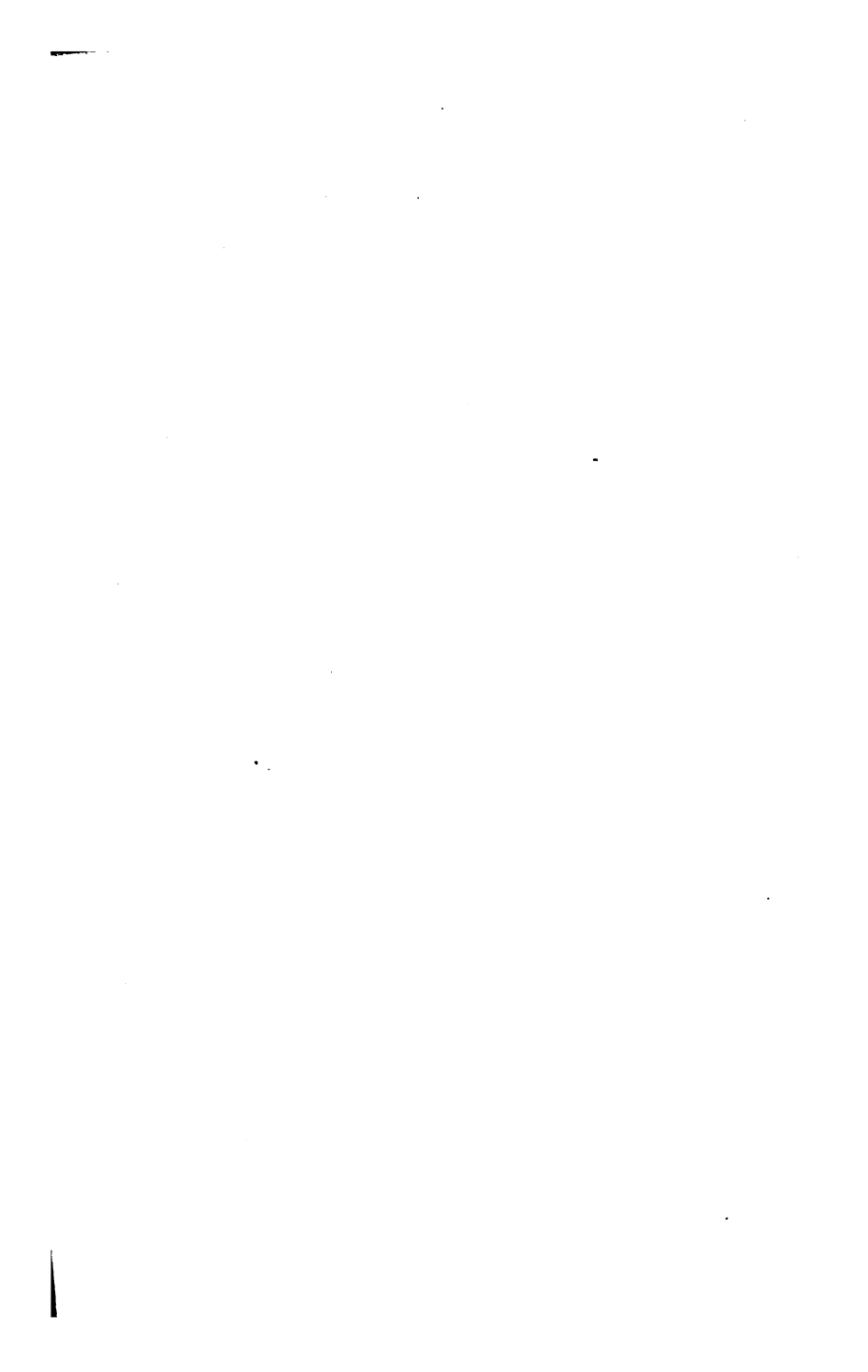
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